

Issue 31

\$4.50

ANIMATO!

The Animation Fan's Magazine

EXCLUSIVE!

Gerald Scarfe On "Pink Floyd - The Wall"



Vocal Great Don Messick Profiled
Stan Lee Speaks About New Marvel Animation
Animato! Film Poll Results

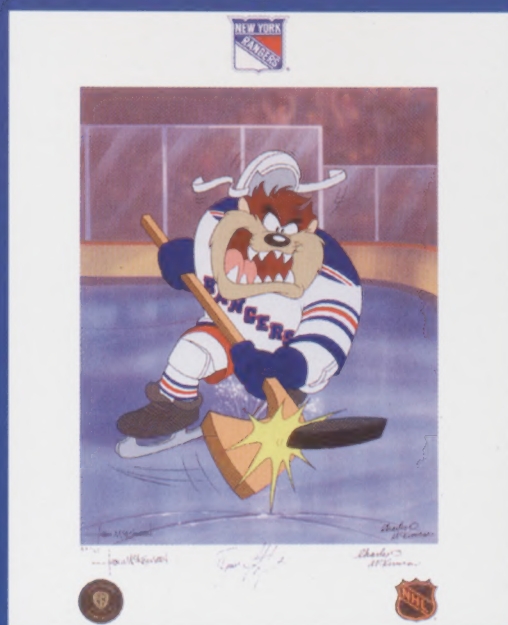
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ANIMATO!

The Animation Fan's Magazine

Publisher-torial

Perfect timing. Jerry Beck's new book, 50 Greatest Cartoons is in bookstores and the ANIMATO! Film Poll tabulations are spitting out of the computer. Singularly and together, these two surveys will give animation fans limitless fodder for debate and discussion. For the record, Jerry Beck and friends did a great job on 50 Greatest Cartoons. A labor of love with quality text and graphics throughout, I don't know any animation fan that wouldn't devour a copy.

I must confess there is one endeavor on the 50 Greatest Cartoons list that would have a hard time garnering my vote. *Toot, Whistle, Plunk and Boom!* is "fingernails on a blackboard" to me. Sorry, Ward. This cartoon, historical significance aside, would make my top-ten list of 'toons from hell.

After reading Joe Barbera's My Life In 'toons, I was fascinated by how much material wasn't in the book by a man who's spent decades in the animation business. Mostly, Joe's book piqued my interest for more information on his partner, Bill Hanna.

A few years back, Mike and I attended an animation expo in New York City. Bill Hanna was among the honored guests. Back then we had only a brief encounter due to travel constraints and Bill's schedule for the expo and media interviews. I regret, now more than ever, not finding a way to spend more time one-on-one with the quiet man, Bill Hanna.

A large number of women work directly and indirectly in the animation industry. Yet, a huge proportion of a media coverage focuses on men in the industry. At ANIMATO! we've been planning a series called Women In Animation for the last two years. I have mixed emotions on this subject because I believe we should be able to recognize talent and creativity without resorting to gender labels. I've often thought the animation industry was less subject to racial and gender discrimination than the average industrial conglomerate. Not perfect, mind you. Just a better career choice for talented individuals. In a perfect world, hard work, talent and creativity rises above boot-licking and the Old Boy Network. Right?

Months after Mike and I decided to make a concerted effort to focus on women in animation, I was both excited and dismayed to discover Jayne Pillings' book Women & Animation in Doug Ranney's Whole Toon Catalog. Excited because there's more talented ladies involved with animation worldwide than one might first imagine. Dismayed because it would appear as though we were shadowing Pilling's footsteps. We're not. So let's spotlight some interesting animation folks who just happen to be women.

As always, feel free to write to ANIMATO! if you have something you want to share with me and Mike. If your letter is nasty and irate, address it to the Editor. Just kidding. We read all our mail and welcome comments on all facets of our publishing endeavor.

I'd like to welcome two new contributors to the ANIMATO! roster—Darris McFarland and Celina Brooks.

Darris McFarland is a graduate of UMass-Lowell with a B.A. in American Studies. An accomplished musician and composer, Darris is cutting heads around New England with the head-banging metal band, *Tragic Jack*.

Celina Brooks is the manager of Showcase Comics and Cards at the Hampshire Mall in Hadley, MA. A long time comic book collector and avid science fiction and fantasy reader, she graduated from Westfield State College in 1990 with a B.A. in Fine Arts and minors in mathematics and graphic design. After graduating, she worked for 5 years as a graphic designer for an advertising firm until leaving for her current position. Her interest in animation stems from her love of art, illustration and comic books, feeling the field of animation is a unique blend of the three.



Winter 1995 Issue 31

17 Spruce St. Springfield, MA
01105

413-731-7928

Fax: 413-596-3046

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ISSN: 1042-539X

Publisher: Patrick Duquette

Editor: G. Michael Dobbs

Layout: Gene Gumbs

Typesetting, Proofreading and

Mailing Assist: Sheila Boilard and

Mary Cassidy

Front Cover Mechanical produced

by Ray Dorow II

Founders: Michael Ventrella and

Scott Gillespie

Our Hat's Off to Harry McCracken

Printed by those animated folks at

Turley Publishing, Palmer, MA

Special thanks to Pam Martin, Rama Weiner at Tara Releasing, Paula Kaplan at Nickelodeon and Steve Bissette.

Distributed to newsstands and bookstores by Fine Print, Bernhard DeBoer, Inc., Ubiquity Distributors, and Desert Moon, and to the direct comics market by Capital City. If your favorite bookstore, comic shop, video shop or record store isn't carrying ANIMATO!, let us know. Distribution terms are available upon request.

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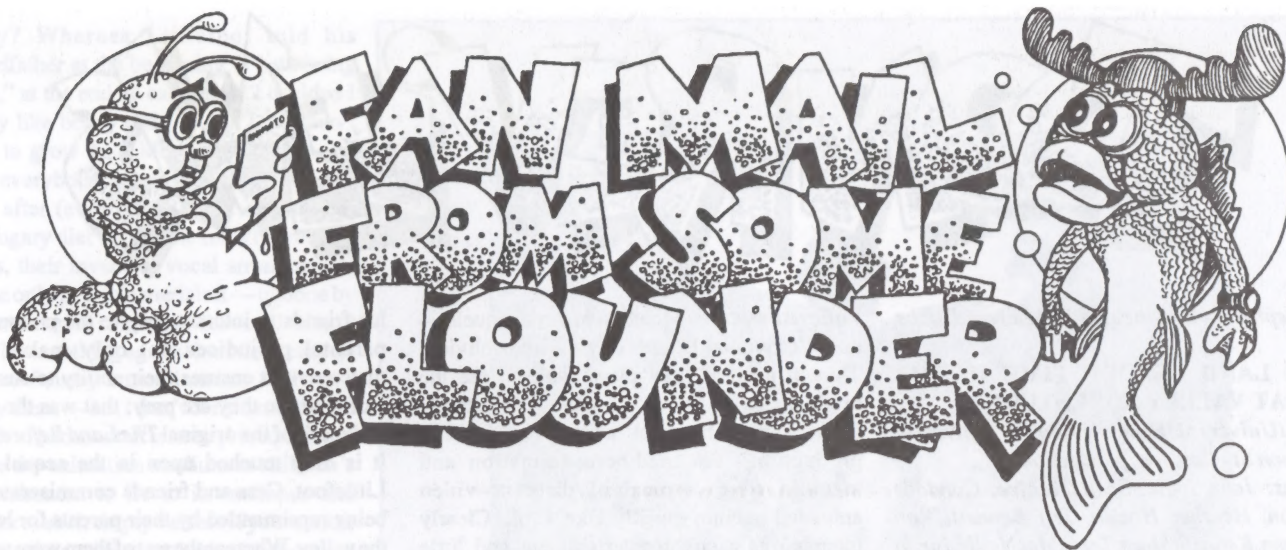
About the Cover...

One of Gerald Scarfe's visions from *Pink Floyd: The Wall*, taken from an original cel. From the collection of Pam and Bob Martin.

Patrick

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Kudos to Krempa
Kurt Striffol
 Scotia, NY

After reading [issue 29], I can't believe that some readers are upset with Paul Krempa's reviews. Much of what he is stating is not novel or unknown, just unpublished. I'm glad that ANIMATO! is bringing this point of view in the open. It is extremely interesting to note that since his articles have appeared, the Friz Freleng limited editions are starting to look incredible and Hanna Barbera released a cel with Ed Benedict's and Hanna and Barbera's signature on them. I think that it's more than a coincidence that this is taking place just months after the articles have appeared. I'm glad that ANIMATO! has the guts to publish the columns. Kudos to ANIMATO! and Paul.

"Super, Amazing, Prima!"
 Anne Martinez

Dear "Silly Cartoonist People,"

LOVE this magazine! My only regret is that I did not discover this magazine before. It is super, amazing, prima! Not only did I learn more about *Kimba The White Lion*, I discovered some in-jokes in *Rocko* that I did not notice before. My favorite feature was the article on *Animaniacs*, which I went, uh, "wakko" for when it debuted. Thanks for the info on TMS; I wondered why episodes looked so different. The author expressed my views exactly.

Also, I loved the Joe Murray comic and the poll; very cool. I right away ordered (or will order, tomorrow) the back issues, and I'm subscribing, too. The June Foray article was also great. Thanks for working so hard, despite your many syntax errors. Also, you mistakenly quoted lines from *Aladdin* as "Where they cut off your nose if they don't like your face," when it should have been "ears" instead of "nose." Thanks again, I can't wait to receive my next

issue and the back issues.

P.S. It would be excruciatingly wonderful if you had an interview with one of the following voice people: Rob Paulsen, Jim Cummings, Frank Welker, Tress MacNeille, Nancy Cartwright, Jess Harrell, Dan Castellana.

The best person you could possibly interview would be Charles M. Jones. (Of course, this is my first issue, so I don't know whether you've already interviewed them or not.)

Thanks again. Okay, I love you. Bye,bye.

We love you, too, and thanks for the suggestions on voice actors to interview. GMD

Old King Cole
 Peter Adamakos, President
 International Museum of Cartoon Art

Regarding the Animation Preservation Report by Jere Guldin in the Summer 1994 issue, the film *Old King Cole* (1926) is mentioned, adding that the animator and production company are unknown.

I think some consideration should be given to the possibility that it was made by Herbert Dawley who made silent silhouette cartoons. Only one is known to survive, according to the best book on silent cartoons, BEFORE MICKEY, but we have a second one. From the look of the single frame reproduced in the article the resemblance to the work of Dawley is strong, but of course one frame isn't enough to go by. Dawley also produced some of Tony Sarg's silhouette work and animated some himself, according to the book, so maybe it's theirs.

In Defense of "Illustrated Radio"
 Charles Ulrich

ANIMATO! #29 contains a special section entitled "The Return of Creator-Driven

Cartoons," in which animation writers come in for some harsh criticism. I'm sure that Bill Scott, head writer for Jay Ward Productions, would have been able to reply eloquently if he were alive today. In his absence, I will do my best.

G. Michael Dobbs writes, "With low budgets and fast schedules, television animation had to be made by committee with a realization that making animated drawings cost more money (than) recording a voice track. The result of these market demands was animation that was script-driven as opposed to image driven." He quotes Fred Seibert, president of Hanna Barbera: "In the 'Golden Age,' writers filled the gaps between the pictures, while today's 'animation' fills the gaps between the words."

An interview with *Ren and Stimpy* creator John Kricfalusi is entitled "Writers Need Not Apply." Dobbs writes "Show biz corporate types and sit-com writers are among the worst infidels in Kricfalusi's book....He is quick to criticize television animation that has been more controlled by script-writers than animators, and questions the role that any person who can't draw has in the creation of a story for animation.

Jay Ward cartoons-including *Rocky and Bullwinkle*, *Fractured Fairy Tales*, and *George of the Jungle*- were produced in a way that makes them apparent targets of Kricfalusi's criticism. With one exception, the writers just wrote scripts, and these were subsequently sent to the storyboard department.¹ While the writers were not yet experienced in writing for sitcoms, three of them certainly went on to be successful sitcom writers and producers-Allan Burns on *Mary Tyler Moore* and *Rhoda*, Chris Hayward on *Get Smart* and *Barney Miller*, and Lloyd Turner on *The Jeffersons* and *Good Times* (among others). Not only did animators and directors come after the writers in the procedure for making Jay Ward cartoons, but they were

Continued on Page 68

TOON REVIEWS

By Stephen R. Bissette and G. Michael Dobbs

THE LAND BEFORE TIME II: THE GREAT VALLEY ADVENTURE

MCA/Universal Home video, a Universal Cartoon Studios, Inc. production

Voices: John Ingle, Scott McAfee, Candace Hutson, Heather Hogan, Jeff Bennett, Rob Paulsen, Kenneth Mars, Tress MacNeille, Linda Gary.

Script: Dev Ross, John Loy, John Ludin, based on characters created by Judy Freudberg, Tony Geiss.

Producer and director: Roy Allen Smith.

I saw the original *Land Before Time* (1988) with my kids, and their enjoyment considerably boosted my own. Like the Disney classics it emulated, *The Land Before Time* was melodramatically manipulative and contrivedly "cute," but it had a story to tell, and it told it well, with integrity, style, and heart. Directed by renegade Disney veteran Don Bluth (whose best effort remains his first feature, *The Secret of NIMH*, 1982), it was one of the few contemporary American animated features to avoid the musical-extravaganza format, and its quest adventure (a group of dinosaur children stranded in the wastelands search for the Great Valley, where their family and food await) touched its young target audience. Littlefoot, Cera, Petri, Ducky and Spike were engaging characters, and my kids and their friends played the roles over and over afterwards (the true test of any children's entertainment). They recognized these archetypes and felt a great comradeship with them, shared the fear that the world was bigger and more dangerous than they could know, and that if they were going to make it through, they had to stick together.

And they clearly understood the quaint notion that one should avoid big, nasty things that want to eat you alive. "Yup, yup, yup!"

It seems to me there was, for a time, a deeper bond between my children and *The Land Before Time* than I knew. Perhaps the shadow of extinction kids know claimed the *real* dinosaurs only heightened the urgency of the tale, made it more vital to them. I suspect time will only deepen the resonance it held for them as children, as their generation inherits the global disasters (and fear of our own extinction) we have passed on to them.

I hope *The Land Before Time II: The Great*

Valley Adventure—the first of three sequels—doesn't trivialize Bluth's original into oblivion. Though it is, at first, pleasurable to see the original cast of characters again (consistently showcasing the best animation in this production), the mediocre animation and maudlin songs typical of direct-to-video animated pablum quickly take a toll. Clearly intended as a slight entertainment and little more, *The Land Before Time II* is a witless, episodic affair sans style or pace, further leadened by its pious pretensions. The simple imperatives of the first film's quest for food and family are supplanted by the sort of witless morality play enforced by television Standards and Practices watchdogs: in a vacuum where guns don't shoot and swords don't cut, dinosaurs don't really bite each other, either. They just *threaten* to bite, and even that threat cannot be too ominous. Hence, the Great Valley is miraculously free of carnivores of any kind and everybody sings a lot, until a pair of comedic British-accented *Struthiomimus* sneak into the valley in search of eggs to steal and eat. The ensuing shuffle of slapstick and increasingly strained action has Littlefoot and friends steadfastly remain independent of any parental guidance as they rescue a mysterious egg. It soon hatches an infant *T. rex* they dub Chomper. Chomper is, of course, a meat-eater, but as the cloying song they all sing asserts, "We're a family and you're one of us now." In a series of escalating confrontations with the egg-stealers, quicksand, lava-spewing volcanoes, and a pair of renegade adult *T. rex*, Littlefoot and company shelter Chomper until, finally the adult dinosaurs intercede and save the day.

Only tots will find this engaging on any level—most kids will find their credibility strained beyond the breaking point after Chomper's birth. They'll agree with Cera when she reacts to being bitten with "a sharp-tooth can *never* be one of us—*Never*. You *know* it's true." "Well, he didn't mean it," another character responds, and the issue is skirted for the rest of the narrative. This coy confusion characterizes the script: it pretends to touch on deeper issues, but any genuine confrontation is swept aside in a hogwash of platitudes, busy action, and song, expressing nothing. It's a cheat, pure and simple.

As in the original, racism is addressed through the metaphor of discrimination between dinosaur species. The ability of Littlefoot and

his friends to interact despite the pressures of parental prejudices not only makes them distinctive, it ensures their ability to survive a world where they are prey: that was the moral and merit of the original *The Land Before Time*. It is only touched upon in the sequel when Littlefoot, Cera and friends commiserate after being reprimanded by their parents for leaving the valley. Whereas the rest of them were warned of the real dangers, Cera's bigot father has instructed her not to "hang around with long necks, beakfaces, and spike tails." The look that passes between them, and Cera's reply ("well, it was *almost* the same lecture") is the only moment of effective drama in the entire sequel. In another scene, Ducky's common-sense exclamation, "No, Chomper, you can *not* eat Petri, no!" is immediately muddled with, "Huh? I said 'no'—just like my parents. Oh, no, no, no, no, no." The problem isn't that Ducky is confused, it's that the authors have no real point to make.

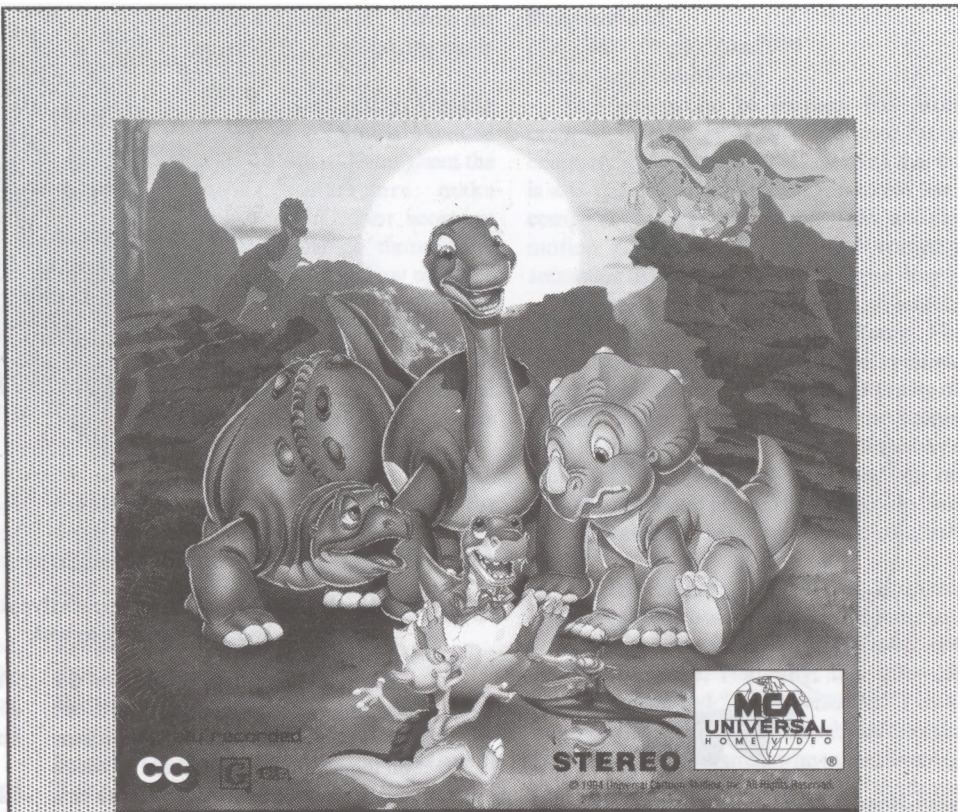
There is a story here to tell, but the filmmakers haven't the fortitude to tell it. There is a moral point to be made—if the story were really about confronting the difficulties of trying to accept and assimilate someone who is undoubtably a real threat to the community. These are the situations the script constructs, but refuses to resolve. There is no moral center in the Standards & Practices-enforced vacuum, and aimless, irresponsible "children's entertainment" remain its legacy. The messages that come through loud and clear here include "bigotry is bad, but certainly *not* dangerous. Your parents may be wrong about some things, but they are your parents, and they do mean well. In fact, children are never really in any danger. 'Sharpteeth' have sharp teeth, but they don't *mean* to bite. Predators are dangerous, but they don't *mean* to eat you." It's the same drivel Saturday morning cartoons have been reduced to for three decades: just be nice to everybody, and they'll be nice to you. Even if they do have sharp teeth.

This aversion renders all subsequent action inconsequential, even (especially) for its young audience, as the climax becomes more and more ridiculous. Why, the adult *T. rex* aren't really hungry, they just want their egg back! As the *T. rex* trot off holding hands (I kid you not!) with baby Chomper in tow, all is right with the world. And what, pray tell, is the moral of this

story? Whereas Littlefoot told his grandfather at the beginning "I hate being little," at the end he exclaims, "I decided I really like being a kid — but I still can't wait to grow up!" More babies are born, and everybody sings, and lives happily ever after (even The Roches succumb to the sugary diet with some frankly dreadful tunes, their inventive vocal arrangements — the only possible merit left — undone by the amateurish singing of the vocal talent.)

I have nothing against harmless, empty-headed fantasy entertainments — I quite enjoy them — but I don't consider this kind of drivel harmless. It is not a prerequisite of either the animation medium or children's entertainment to lie to its audience and pander to such empty values. If you want to see an animated feature that had the courage to tell a similar tale — of the toll bigotry and, more specific to the story at hand, predator and prey roles can take on childhood friendships — treat yourself to the excellent Walt Disney feature *The Fox and the Hound* (1981).

Despite MCA/Universal's promotion stressing that this sequel "is brilliantly animated by the same team that brought *The Land Before Time* characters vibrantly to life," the hype is false. The original was produced by blockbusters Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, Kathleen Kennedy and Frank Marshall, and Don Bluth was the man behind the creative effort, but none of them are in sight here. Meticulous combing of the credits reveals only *one* craftsman associated with the original feature (key animator Patrick Gleeson), and actress Candy Hutson's reprise of Cera's vocal role — hardly "the same team" behind the original. The animation studio responsible for the first *Land Before Time* was Sullivan Bluth Studios Ireland Ltd. of Dublin, Ireland (who filed for bankruptcy in 1993, and just signed a long-term contract with Fox Video's Family Films division); the bulk of *Land Before Time II* was animated in the Asia by Akom Productions Co., Inc. While the quality of the animation and design is acceptable by made-for-video standards, it lacks the lush detail and supple fluidity of Bluth Studios' work. A number of clumsy attempts at forced perspective (which Bluth utilized with great skill to emphasize the enormous proportions of the 'longneck' adults) demonstrate that Universal Cartoon Studios simply weren't up to the challenge. Chomper and his parents, the new characters created for the sequel, suffer in comparison with the impressive *Fantasia*-inspired 'Sharptooth' which dominated the original. Creatively, this merely serviceable sequel is an inauspicious debut for Universal's fledgling animation department, though that hardly matters to the front office, who only care about how much



money this direct-to-video gem rakes in.

If parents and grandparents could see the promo reel sent to video merchants, they'd know what this is *really* all about. After reminding retailers of the \$46 million the original feature earned at the boxoffice and the \$78 million it reaped in rental revenues ("in addition to its sell-through success!"), Alexander & Associates claim the advertising blitz (launched Dec. 25th) for *The Land Before Time II* reached "95% of all women [ages] 25 - 49, 6.2 times, and 98% of all women 55 plus, targeting grandmothers, 9.2 times. This powerful advertising support will generate over 610 million consumer impressions." These are the corporate carnivores our culture continues to stupidly entrust with the "moral education" of our children. No wonder this sequel blurs the common-sense delineation between predator and prey; the company proprietors have a great stake in blurring that distinction. "Sharpteeth," indeed: as a much older and wiser fairy tale reminded us, "the better to eat you with, my dear."

The Land Before Time may or may not be a classic, but it once meant a great deal to my children and their friends. I have no doubt that kids will lose interest in these vapid new "adventures" long before they actually outgrow Littlefoot and his friends, as they learn that revisiting beloved cartoon creations via sequels is the usual diminishing emotional investment. It's called 'exploitation,' kids: just another calculated adult betrayal of something that, at

one time, spoke to you and was, perhaps, important to you. Alas, it's the only real lesson to be learned from *The Land Before Time II*.
Stephen R. Bissette

Daisy-Head Mayzie

30 minutes

Premieres Feb. 5 at 7:30 on TNT

Encore Broadcasts:

Feb. 5, 7:30 p.m., 8:00 p.m., and 8:30 p.m.

Feb. 11 at 5:00 p.m.

Feb. 12 at 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Feb. 19 at 8:30 p.m.

British animator Tony Collingwood's adaptation of the recently-discovered Dr. Seuss manuscript is a worthy addition to such animated Seuss classics as *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* and *The Lorax*. The half-hour production debuts in February on the TNT cable channel.

Daisy-Head Mayzie tells the tale of a little girl named Mayzie who one day in school suddenly sprouts a daisy from her head. At first treated like a freak, she is then lionized by the public with the help of an agent named Finagle. Achieving fame and fortune, she learns some hard lessons about true friendship.

Written 20 years ago, and only recently found by the author's widow, *Daisy-Head Mayzie* is extremely topical. The good doctor obviously pulled a Nostrodamos, and saw a time in which people even as odious as John Wayne Bobbitt earning a living based on non-achievement. Dr. Seuss obviously also took



Daisy-Head herself (© Hanna-Barbera Cartoons, Inc)

Andy Warhol's saying concerning 15 minutes of fame, and created a children's book that addresses the nature of celebrity and prejudice.

Dr. Seuss's reasons for shelving the book are not known, but the timing is perfect today for children to hear such a message. In a unique move, the TNT special is being broadcast just two months after the release of *Daisy-Head Mayzie* in book form.

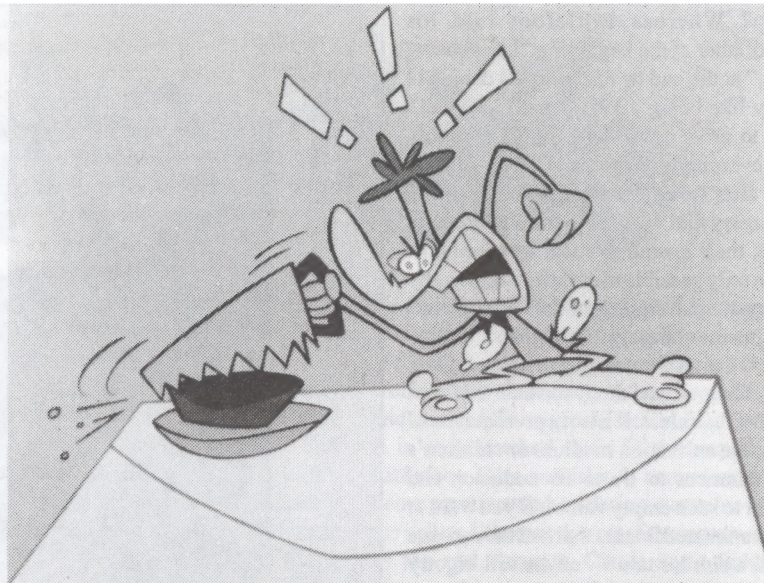
The animated production is handsome with fidelity to the Seuss style of illustration, fluid animation and a solid vocal cast headed by Henry Gibson's *Cat in the Hat*, who serves as the story's narrator. **GMD**

World Premiere Toons

Yuckie Duck in Short Orders

The Powerpuff Girls in Meat Fuzzy Lumkins

If the common characteristic exhibited by the two World Premiere cartoons on the preview tape sent by Cartoon Network holds true for the rest of the new seven-minute shorts, then the series shows great promise. Although *Yuckie Duck in Short Orders* and *The Powerpuff Girls in Meat Fuzzy Lumkins* are not alike in design or humor, they are alike in being true to themselves. Too long television animation has been held hostage to whatever trends studio execs, advertising agencies and network bigwigs deemed hot. These shorts take animation back to a time in which there was room to experiment. (For a full description of the World Premiere Toons program see the interview with Fred Siebert in *ANIMATO!* #29.)



Yuckie Duck and an uncooperative steak. (TM and © 1995 Hanna-Barbera, Cartoons, Inc. All rights reserved.)

The secret to *Yuckie Duck* is on the opening scene in which the viewer can sport photos of silent film comedians on the wall of the restaurant in which the title character works. Yuckie as a character has as much on-screen

personality as Billy Bevan or Snub Pollard, two lesser silent film comics whose exaggerated moustaches were the only way to tell them apart. I believe that's deliberate, as it frees Pat Ventura to parade a series of old-fashioned slapstick gags with a Nineties gross-out edge. Although I've never seen so many cockroaches and rats depicted in a humorous short, the humor here is never as quite unremittingly mean-spirited or tasteless as in *The Brothers Grunt*.

The Powerpuff Girls is more in line with an opening episode of a series. The audience is introduced to the girls and their alter egos (which are really little different than their superhero identities!), and go on their adventure with them. Take equal parts of Sixties Japanese animation, big-eyed little kid paintings, and again the Nineties retro- Avery/Clampett anything-for-a-laugh-sense-of-humor, and you have Craig McCracken's creation.

The animation on both cartoons is indeed the kind of limited style one expects with television animation, but in both cases the shorts have been designed to make the most of their budgets.

My only complaint, which may be because I viewed previews of both shorts, is a lack of credit for vocal performers. I hope this is changed by the shorts' broadcast. (See the Toon News section in this issue for a schedule for the World Premiere Toons broadcasts.) **GMD**

The Secret Adventures of Tom Thumb

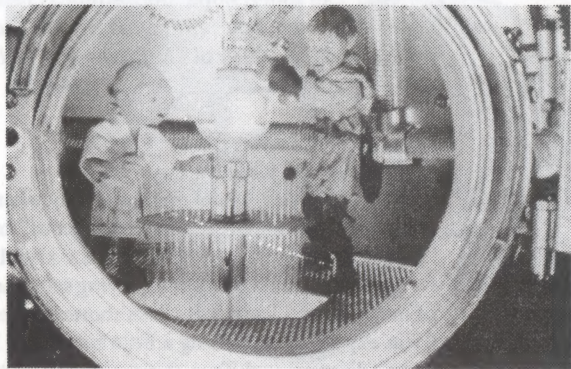
British; 61 minutes; unrated

now in theatrical release from Tara Releasing

Animation fans might first believe that *The Secret Adventures of Tom Thumb* is in the tradition of Brothers Quay or Jan Svankmajer because of its art direction and design. Frankly, though, I enjoyed this British production far more than any of the Brothers Quay pieces I've seen as *Tom Thumb* has an accessible narrative despite its nightmare-like setting and characters.

If anyone needed ammunition for the argument that in the post-*Jurassic Park* world stop-motion animation is alive and well, *Tom Thumb* is more than adequate. Set in a world both more advanced and more primitive than our own, this visually arresting film tells a story of despair and yet ultimately hope. Director Dave Borthwick puts his actors actually into the animation through pixilation. With the exception of the climax of *The Wizard of Speed and Time*, never has this difficult technique been used so effectively. By having his actors animated as well as his models, Borthwick creates a truly unique texture for his film. The look of the film is complemented by Borthwick's decision to tell his story with a minimum of dialogue and with a score by John Paul Jones formerly of Led Zeppelin.

The Secret Adventures of Tom Thumb is the story of a tiny infant born to an incredibly bleak and apparently poor couple. Tom is the light which illuminates their miserable lives, and when agents of the government come to remove Tom for apparent study in a laboratory, the couple is devastated, as is Tom himself. The film implies that Tom himself is the product of some sort of experiment, and Tom discovers much about his world in his effort to be reunited with his parents.



Tom Thumb and Jack the Giant Killer from *The Secret Adventures of Tom Thumb*.

In his quest to see his parents, Tom meets a village of tiny people, including Jack the Giant Killer who wants to get into the lab from which Tom escaped. Jack wants to destroy the lab and the "giant's" weaponry.

Technically, the film is extremely polished. The design of the models is original, and the animation is damn near flawless. Nick Upton, as Tom's father, is highly effective in a role with considerable physical and acting demands.

Although, *Tom Thumb* may not be the kind of movie many people would want to see again and again, it is a film that every stop motion fan should see at least once. **GMD**

Oblivion

Full Moon Production 1994
Paramount Home Video

Budget-wise, this recent Full Moon production is clearly one of the company's "A" movies, although that's strictly within the definitions of a direct-to-video film. While the sets, the cast, and the special effects are more than adequate to tell this "cowboys and aliens" story, it is the script and the direction that undermine the entertainment value.

From the promotion materials, I'm told the film is set in the year 3031, a fact that is lacking in the movie itself. All the viewer knows is the dusty trail town of Oblivion is really on an alien world centuries into the future, and that Earth is a dim historical note for its residents. Why there are literally cowboys and Indians on this world is never explained. This is the kind of movie in which there are spaceships, ray guns, six shooters and horses all tossed in together with no logic at all.

The cast flails around in a great effort to tell a story with the most embarrassing performance by *Star Trek* legend George Takei, (although a close second would be Julie Newmar once again referring to her stint as Catwoman). Takei is the both the town doctor and drunk (combining for the sake of the budget two of the prevalent Western stereotypes), and in one scene as he stumbles down the street with a bottle of Jim

Beam, he cries out, "Beam me up, Jim!" Well, everybody needs to pay the rent.

The one truly shining moment in the film is provided by David Allen. Throughout the movies, characters make references to giant scorpion creatures who go through the night. When they show up in the plot, Allen's effects don't let the viewer down. Clearly an affectionate tip-of-the-hat to Willis O' Brien's *The Black Scorpion*, Allen's creatures are superb.

In the wake of *Jurassic Park* and the premature announcement of the death of stop-motion animation, Allen shows just what competent stop-motion can do to liven up a truly awful movie. **GMD**

Arcade

Full Moon Production 1993
Paramount Home Video

Arcade answers the question of whatever happened to Peter Billingsley, the child star of Bob Clark's great film, *The Christmas Story*. Peter has grown into a young man starring in this extremely cheesy rip-off of *Tron*.

The irony of *Arcade* is that computer animation has come such a far distance from the 1982 Disney production that one would think Fullmoon's Charles Band and company could have done something truly interesting. After all, computer animation has advanced to the point that incredible effects are being produced for a fraction of the time, talent and money that went into the *Tron* effects over a decade ago.

Under the ham-handed direction of Albert Pyun, whatever potential *Arcade* had as a computer-game-with-intelligence-capturing kids-who-play-it horror film falls flat. In computerese, in a world in which you need 8 megs of RAM, this film barely manages to have 1 meg.

Arcade is the type of film that, in order to get an R rating which would appeal to teenagers, the dreaded "F word" is used several times. There's no blood to speak of, no nudity, no sex, and no gore. Those elements would have cost Band some money. Having his young cast shoot off a dirty word or two is much cheaper.

The computer animation effects are serviceable, but hardly spectacular, which is what this flaccid little drama needed to succeed. This film and *Oblivion* sum up many of the problems Full Moon productions have. Either they have the elements for success, but just can't put them together (*Oblivion*), or they lack what they need, and just sort of coast through 88 minutes of videotape (*Arcade*). **GMD**

Dragonworld

Moonbeam Production 1994
Paramount Home Video

This has got to be the best Full Moon production I've seen to date. Produced for the company's Moonbeam label (meaning that this is a G-rated family film), *Dragonworld* has a competent cast, wonderful locations, and stop motion animation, robotics and computer animation that effectively create a great dragon.

The script is again the problem, at least for anyone who has seen *Mighty Joe Young*. Five year-old John McGowan is orphaned by an auto accident, and is sent to live with his crusty old grandfather in a remote section of the Scottish Highlands. The elder McGowan tells the boy of the legend of a "wishing tree," and the boy wishes for a friend to keep him company. Soon after, he gets his wish in the form of a baby dragon.

Fifteen years pass, and McGowan's mythical friend is discovered by an obnoxious documentary film maker who trespasses onto the family estate. Naturally, this idiot (the character is named "Bob Armstrong!") sees a fortune in the dragon, and sells the information to a ruthless businessman who takes advantage of McGowan's tax troubles to "rent" the dragon for his amusement park. Watchdogs, fill in the rest!

While the script is a retread, at least the dragon is original, well-designed and is given a personality by David Allen and his crew. Of all of the Full Moon movies which have recently limited (very limited) theatrical release, *Dragonworld* should have been given a chance on the big screens. Released at the right time of the year, it might have done very well, again thanks largely to the fine effects works. **GMD**

Vampire Vixens from Venus

Shanachie Video 1994

A good rule to follow in low-budget filmmaking is to go with your strengths. Whether the chief asset of your production is a prop, a location, a performer or special effects, a savvy producer or director exploits the strongest aspect of his or her film.

That's obviously what director, writer and special effects artist Ted Bohus had in mind with *Vampire Vixens from Venus*. While the New Jersey-filmed science fiction spoof boasts of competent technical values, four genuinely beautiful women (in the title roles), solid computer animated special effects, and some neat make-up designs, the star of this show is an unknown British actor named Peter Grimes.

The problem: Grimes is not star material. At times he's amusing, but by the end of the movie, I was hoping his character would meet a thoroughly disgusting demise. Grimes mugs his way through this film in a pale imitation of Peter Sellers' Inspector Clouseau character.

Leslie Glass, Theresa Lynn, and J.J. North star as the titular vampire vixens. Their mission on Earth is to extract the liquid part of our bodies, and to do that they transform themselves from their hideous natural state to forms more pleasing to horny humans. Once a guy is interested, they waste little time strapping a helmet to his head extracting his precious body fluids and leaving him resembling a pitted prune.

As they leave a trail of dried remains around New Jersey, the police begin to investigate under the barely competent leadership of one Detective Lieutenant Oakenshield. His efforts to get to the bottom of the mysterious deaths is sidetracked by a not-so-chance meeting with a lovely woman played by Michelle Bauer who just happens to be the ugliest Venusian of the all.

The animation effects are particularly impressive in the opening sequence with a Buck Rogers-style spacecraft circling the earth. The animated alien lawman at the conclusion of the film isn't as well done, but is no embarrassment.

While the emphasis on comedy rather than and-a or gore is refreshing to see in a low-budget genre film, the movie's problem is that Grimes is a totally unappealing performer who bogs the film down everytime his character is on the screen. The four vampire vixens, though, all show an ease before the camera, and a lot of good humor.

While not as accomplished a low-budget effort as *Dinosaur Island*, writer, director and producer Ted Bohus does shows a lot of promise. GMD

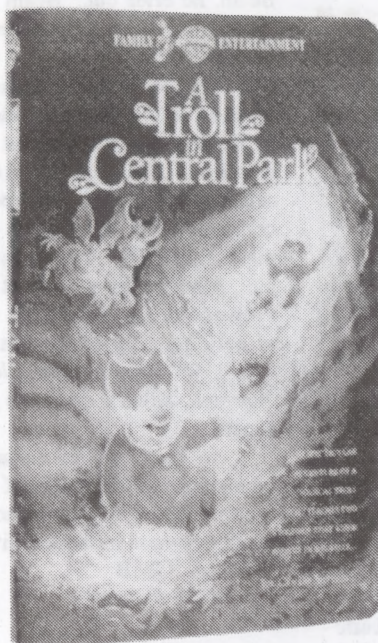
A Troll in Central Park

Warner Brothers Home Video 1994

The mystery behind the career of Don Bluth is just how he continues to manage to find backers for his ill-conceived animated features. Bluth's theatrical failures, *All Dogs Go to Heaven*, *Rock-A-Doodle* and *Thumbelina*, are video successes, though, thanks to the growing demand for G-rated children's fare. As long as a film is inoffensive, and can be sold as a sell-through tape with a suggested retail price if \$25.00 or less, it can be a hit.

Undoubtedly the video success of the above titles is what convinced 20th Century-Fox to sign a multi-film production pact with Bluth who recently closed down his Irish studio and opened a Phoenix, Arizona operation.

Bluth, who got his start at Disney, has long made a public relations habit of recounting how dissatisfied he and his partner Gary Goldman were at the Mouse Factory in the Seventies, and how they wanted to do classic full animation on their own terms. His career has been erratic at best. While *Secret of NIMH*, *An American Tail* and *The Land Before Time* were hits with audiences and critics alike, too many of Bluth's films show a poor story sense, unappealing



character design, and an ironic reliance on the traditions of Disney animation.

The new Bluth film on home video is *A Troll in Central Park*, which unlike *Thumbelina* was not released theatrically, and is an example of all of Bluth's weaknesses. *Troll* tells the story of Stanley, a round and bouncy troll who can grow flowers by touching his thumb to the ground. Stanley's passion with vegetation gets him in trouble with the queen troll who hates flowers, and Stanley is banished to a "place of stone and steel where nothing grows, and where the people are nastier than us." Naturally, that's New York.

In New York, Stanley settles in Central Park where he is entranced by all of the trees and flowers, and where he meets a young brother and sister, children of an upwardly-mobile yuppie couple. The rest of the story follows in a strictly formula format...Stanley teaches the kids Something Significant; he rescues the kids when the evil queen comes to New York to kill them; and he dies only to live again through the kids' love.

Dom DeLuise is the voice of Stanley, and gives undoubtedly his most cloying, gooey, self-conscious performance as a voice-over artist. DeLuise is capable of doing good things (listen to his work in Bluth's *Secret of NIMH*), but here his Ed Wynn-styled giggle is very annoying.

While the animation is still far more polished than a typical Saturday morning fare, it is by no means up to Bluth's usual standard, and you can easily see the shortcuts to undoubtedly fit the restraints of a low budget. There are few scenes with any shadowing, and rotoscoping is used in the animation of the human characters.

One can only hope that Bluth's new association with Fox will signal a return to productions the caliber of *The Secret of NIMH*. GMD

The Nana and Little Puss Puss Show

Expanded Entertainment

I have to admit that often times today when I am offered a look at a new "outrageous" or "mature" animation collection, I brace myself for the usual bathroom humor. Having seen one of the Nana and Little Puss Puss shorts before, I was expecting something a little better, and I wasn't disappointed. True, there are indeed a lot of scatological laughs in this collection of cartoons produced by DNA Productions, but there is something more.

Perhaps it's the fact the animation, though low budget, is inventive and accomplished, or the genuinely wacky voices and music push this tape to the front of its class. I think, though, the short films in the collection show a flair for characterization. Maybe it's just I like these little vignettes with a very old, very randy woman and her free-thinking cat.

There are some clinkers in this collection. The grotesque pirate tale *Weird Beard* was just too long and predictable for me, and the television show parody *Hard Edition* suffered from the same problems.

Overall, though, if you're looking for some good politically incorrect laughs, this is a great tape. Be warned, though, this is not a collection for kids. GMD

Thirty-Two Short Films about Glenn Gould

Columbia/Tristar Home Video

Director Francois Girard's excellent, anecdotal ode to internationally renowned Canadian pianist Glenn Gould is one of the most compelling analysis of the creative process I've ever seen, ranking with Saul Bass' *Why Man Creates* and Steven Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Why review in the pages of ANIMATO! ? Well, number eighteen of the titular thirty-two short films is *Gould Meets McLaren*, weaving Gould's performance of Johann Sebastian's "Bach's Fugue #14" from the *The Well-Tempered Clavier* over an excerpt from Norman McLaren and Rene Jodin's *Spheres* (1969). It is, if you will, a cartoon haiku. A gentle, geometric multiplication of spheres spreads over an ethereal sky until they fill the screen, at which point a butterfly free-flies within the precisely orchestrated pattern. It is an exquisite visualization of the creative process, and its self-fulfilling goal, an elegant application of animation to vividly convey a concept essential to this otherwise live-action portrait of one of the century's most stubbornly eccentric talents. Highly recommended! Stephen R. Bissette

TOONS NEWS

Cartoon Network Hosts Opening of Mr. Spim's Cartoon Theatre; World Premiere Toons Shorts to Precede New Franchise Each Week

Following a brand new *World Premiere Toons* cartoon short at 7:00 p.m. (ET) *Mr. Spim's Cartoon Theater* opens its doors to Cartoon Network viewers on Sunday Feb. 26.

The Cartoon Network will feature a new short with one of its feature films from its library. Here's the schedule:

Feb 26: *Dexter's Laboratory* in *Changes* by Genndy Tartakovsky with *Race for Your Life Charlie Brown*

March 5: *Yuckie Duck* in *Short Orders* by Pat Ventura with *Rockin' with Judy Jetson*

March 12: *The Powderpuff Girls* in *Meat Fuzzy Lumkins* by Craig McCracken with *Scooby-Doo and the Reluctant Werewolf*

March 19: *Dino* in *Stay Out* by Joseph Barbera with *The Good, The Bad and the Huckleberry*

March 26 *Johnny Bravo* by Van Partible with *Charlotte's Web*

April 2: *Sledgehammer Opossum* in *Out and About* by Pat Ventura with *The Phantom Tollbooth*

April 9: *George and Junior* in *Look Out Below* by Pat Ventura with *Gulliver's Travels*

April 16: *Hardluck Duck* by William Hanna with *Timeless Tales*.

Terry Thoren To Lead Klasky Csupo Inc.; Hired To Lead Company Into Feature Production

Terry Thoren, the animation entrepreneur who brought independent animation to the fore and former head of Will Vinton Entertainment, has been named Chief Executive Officer and President of Klasky Csupo, Inc. Thoren reports directly to Gabor Csupo and Arlene Klasky, Co-Chairs of Klasky Csupo, Inc. Thoren comes to the award-winning animation studio best known for such ground-breaking television animation as *The Simpsons*, the Emmy and ACE Award-nominated *Duckman*, and the Emmy and ACE-winning *Rugrats*, — with a mandate to lead the company into feature film development and production and expand other activities including interactive entertainment,



Terry Thoren

licensing, multimedia, CD-Rom, commercials, theme park design and new media ventures.

"I see an enormous potential for growth at Klasky Csupo," said Thoren. "The same no-holds-barred creativity that brought characters like *The Simpsons* and *Duckman* into the cultural lexicon has the potential to make a real impact in the feature arena, not to mention the wide-open field of interactive media. This is an era when independent vision in animation has the opportunity for commercial success to rival the majors."

Gabor Csupo, who co-founded Klasky Csupo, Inc. with Arlene Klasky said, "Terry's goal will be to take our studio to the next level. There is really nobody else right now who has Terry's combined ability to spot and attract cutting-edge international animation talent, and the marketing instinct to bring that talent to the mainstream. He has the same dedication to quality and creativity on which Arlene and I founded this company."

Call to Animators

Cinematic '95 is a new animated film

festival currently being assembled by new York attorney and animation buff Howard Leib for national theatrical distribution by Palisades Entertainment, Inc. *Cinematic '95* will feature both established animators and new talent looking for that first big break. Leib is leaning towards *Ren and Stimpy*-style humor more than classic slapstick, and if you have material you would like to be considered, please send a VHS tape (non-returnable) to Howard Leib, 75 Rockefeller Plaza, Suite 9 Sperry, New York, NY 10019. Questions? Call 212-399-4334.

Conference Invitation

The Society for Animation Studies extends an invitation to scholars and animators to attend its Seventh Annual Conference, hosted by the Department of Broadcasting, Cinema and Theatre at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, September 29 - October 1, 1995. Papers are considered on any aspect of animation, and preconstituted panels are welcome. International participants are encouraged to analyze their regional styles, animators and studios. Presentations are limited to 20 minutes. Papers may be delivered in any language, but English translation should be prepared in time for distribution. Submit a 250-500 word abstract, outlining the purpose, methodology and conclusions of the proposed paper by May 15th, 1995.

For registration information, to submit a paper abstract, or film screening proposal, contact:

Michael Frierson, SAS Conference
Department of Broadcasting, Cinema, and Theatre
100 Carmichael Building
University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Greensboro, NC 27412-5001 USA

The Shnookums & Meat Funny Cartoon Show Debuts from Disney

The new cartoon show from Bill Kopp and Jeff DeGrandis, *The Shnookums & Meat Funny Cartoon Show*, debuted as part of the syndicated Disney Afternoon Monday Mania program in January. Kopp, best known for co-creating *Eek!*

Continued on Page 67

CURIOSITY SHOP:

MICKEY MOUSE'S ILLEGITIMATE OFFSPRING

by Harry McCracken

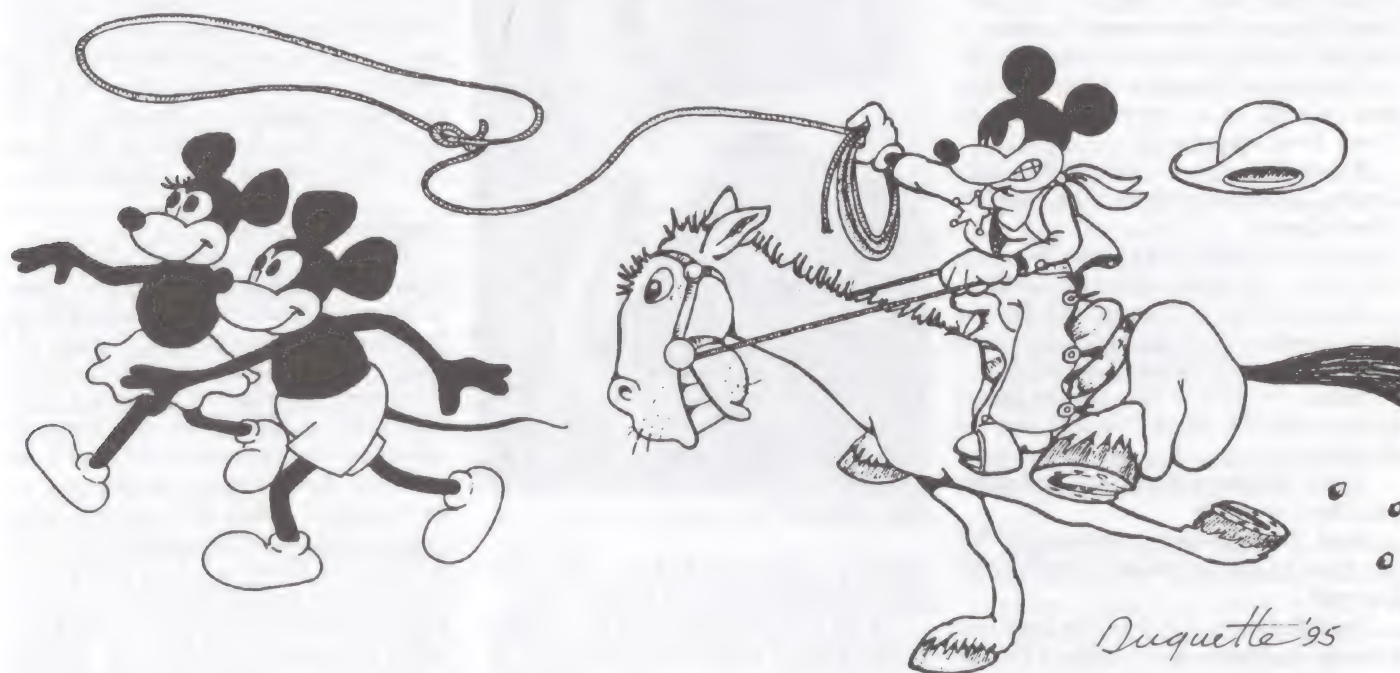
Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery — and the animation industry is constantly paying its heartfelt compliments to the Walt Disney studio. When Disney scored with *The Little Mermaid* and *Beauty and the Beast*, it was a safe bet that a wave of other theatrical cartoons with fairy tale heroines, cute little sidekicks, and Broadway-style scores would follow. Likewise,

(both 1930) star outright clones of Mickey and Minnie Mouse; the only thing the studio resisted doing is actually naming them Mickey and Minnie. (Both of these films are included on Snappy Video's excellent *Uncensored Animation from the Van Beuren Studio* tape, along with *Red Riding Hood* (1929), which stars the imitation Minnie alone.)

Even if you've read Leonard Maltin's account in *Of Mice and Magic* of the Disney-

Mexican cowboy picture a la *Gallopín Gaucho* (1929), the second Mickey Mouse cartoon to be produced. In one scene, the Minnie character performs a dance so energetically that she leaps right out of her skirt and panties; a few beats later, she realizes she's naked, screams in embarrassment, and jumps back into her outfit.

More memorably, *Circus Capers* casts the boy mouse as a circus clown and the girl one as



once the studio became active in producing animated TV series, it was only a matter of time before Warner Bros., Universal, and other Hollywood production companies did the same.

'Twas ever thus. In the early 1930s, the incredible success of Mickey Mouse brought Walt Disney his first worldwide fame, and inspired a veritable army of look-alike characters. Some were outright rip-offs; others merely copied the general attributes that made Mickey so popular. But just about every animation studio on both the west and east coasts tried their hardest to duplicate the Mickey magic.

The most notorious faux Mickeys appeared in films produced by the Van Beuren studio, whose copies were so slavish that Disney successfully sued over them in 1931. Van Beuren cartoons like *Hot Tamale* and *Circus Capers*

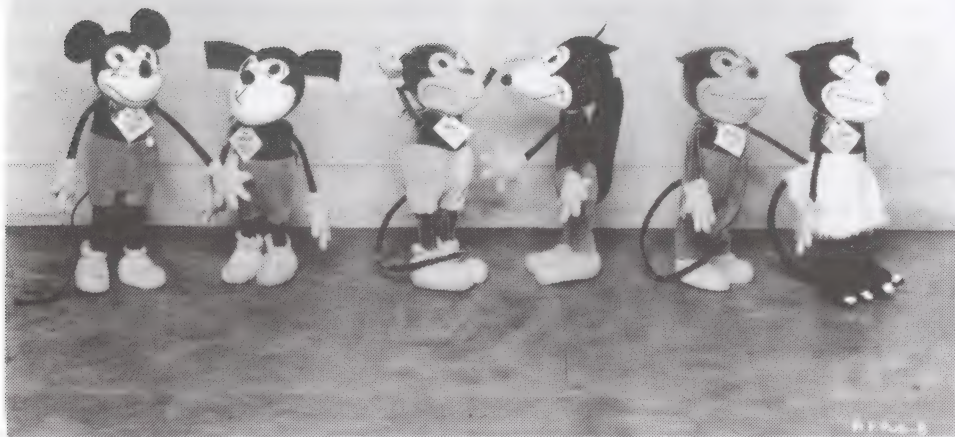
Van Beuren lawsuit, actually seeing these plagiarisms for the first time is startling. Maltin includes a picture from *A Close Call* (1929) of a couple of Van Beuren mice with strong similarities to Mickey and Minnie. But in *Hot Tamale* and *Circus Capers*, you get the feeling that the only reason these rodents don't look exactly like Disney's characters is that Van Beuren's animators weren't skillful enough to create precise copies. (While the studio eventually produced some surprisingly slick films, its output of the early 1930s is so crude that nobody ever looks quite the same from scene to scene.)

That amateurish quality, combined with the racy pre-code humor of these films, turn Van Beuren's mouse cartoons into weird, Twilight Zone-versions of the films Disney was making at the same time. *Hot Tamale*, for example, is a

an acrobat. While the Mickey clone being shot out of a cannon, the Minnie character sneaks off to the private wagon of the ringmaster, leaps in his lap, and kisses him repeatedly, with a degree of illicit passion that the real Minnie would never have dreamed of and the Hays Office wouldn't have liked. When the Mickey knockoff accidentally discovers that his girlfriend's a cheat, he launches into a heartfelt rendition of "Laugh, Clown, Laugh," a performance that's effectively emotional despite the rudimentary of animation. All of this may have been inspired by Charlie Chaplin's *The Circus* (1928), which featured a similar story of romantic melodrama under the big top.

Van Beuren's Disney imitations may have been singularly bold, but they were far from alone. Of all of Disney's competitors, Paul Terry had the most prior claim on animated

AESOP'S FABLES MOVIE DOLLS



This undated photo (undoubtedly from the late Twenties) shows licensed dolls representing characters from the Aesop's Fables series. Take a good look at "Milton" at the far left!

rodents, having used them in cartoons long before Mickey made his appearance in 1928. Still, his cartoons of the early 1930s are overflowing with male and female mice with a particularly strong resemblance to Mickey and Minnie. Terry's belief that "if one mouse is funny, two mice will be twice as funny" was apparent in such films as *Dancing Mice* (1931), which features scenes of five imitation Mickeys dancing with five imitation Minnies.

During this same period, the Fleischer studio was producing highly creative cartoons that owed little to Disney's work in style or content; it only attempted to copy Disney closely in its waning days of the later 1930s and early 1940s. But the studio's early Betty Boop films did feature remarkably Mickey-like mice from time to time. One of the most notable instances is in *Snow-White* (1933), in which a Mickey-style mouse pops out of the trap door in a pair a long underwear long enough to wave cheerfully at the audience. **ANIMATO!** writer Matthew Hasson has suggested that such appearances may be more satirical than imitative in nature.

Just because a character wasn't a rodent didn't mean he wasn't a would-be Mickey. Most major and minor animation characters of the early thirties are based on slight modifications of the Mickey Mouse design. For instance, Van Beuren's Brownie Bear — whom the studio eventually came up with after Disney's court victory — is simply Mickey with slightly smaller ears and a prickly coat of fur.

Then there was Warner Bros.'s Foxy, who

appeared in a handful of cartoons, including the first Merrie Melodie, *Lady Play Your Mandolin* (1931) — yet another Mexican western. Except for his bushy tail, slightly squared-off ears, and spats, this fellow could be Mickey's twin brother, and he had a girlfriend who was a dead-ringer for Minnie. Bosko, the studio's biggest studio at the time — in theory, a cute little black man — also bore a strong resemblance to Mickey.

Walter Lantz's Oswald the Lucky Rabbit couldn't really be criticized for looking like Mickey Mouse. Since he was a Disney creation who predated the mouse, it's more accurate to say that Mickey looked like Oswald. Still, the rabbit's ears grew shorter, rounder, and more mouse-like as a Lantz creation, and in cartoons such as *Bronco Buster* (1935) he speaks with a voice that's eerily like Mickey's, as if Walt Disney was picking up extra cash by moonlighting in the role.

Other characters grew to resemble Mickey as time went on, too. When Ub Iwerks' early Flip the Frog cartoons didn't set the world on fire, he redesigned Flip to appear less like a frog and more like a mouse who happened to lack ears and a nose. Even Fleischer's Bimbo — who was never a true Mickey ripoff — evolved from a lanky dog of varying color in his early appearances into a squat, black canine in the wake of Mickey's popularity. (While Mickey wore pants but no shirt, Bimbo wore a sweater but went pantless.)

It's difficult to pinpoint exactly why the animation industry gave up on creating carbon

copies of Mickey Mouse. Disney's success in its lawsuit against Van Beuren may have ultimately intimidated other animation producers, even those whose Mickey-inspired creations weren't quite so baldfaced in their duplication. It's also possible that the success of characters like Warner's Porky Pig and Fleischer's Popeye showed studios that you could find success without copying Disney.

The growing sophistication of animation character design probably also played a part. The black-and-white, rubber-hose drawing style used in animation of the early 1930s was so stylized that mice, cats, pigs, foxes, and even human beings didn't look much different from each other. As the decade progressed, most studios followed Disney's lead towards a somewhat more realistic approach; it was no longer possible to produce a character of any species based on slight modifications to Mickey's design.

But for whatever reason, the heyday of the imitation Mickeys was over by the mid 1930s. Some existing characters even diverged from their Mickeyesque origins: Walter Lantz redesigned Oswald in 1936 into a cuddly white bunny, for instance. And in 1937, Harman and Ising turned Bosko (in revived form at MGM) from a Mickey wannabee into a decidedly human kid who bore no resemblance to Disney's mouse at all.

When he's not writing about weird and wonderful cartoons, Harry McCracken works as an associate editor at *PC World* magazine in Boston. Know of any forgotten animation that merits rediscovery? Let him know c/o **ANIMATO!**



Animation Preservation Report

by Jere Guldin

Motion pictures once thought to be lost sometimes do get discovered. They surface in private collections, from forgotten vaults, at schools and universities, out of formerly closed eastern European archives, in garages, basements, and footlockers. Most of those found aren't major missing titles; until they turned up, some weren't even known to have been lost! But a good number of significant films, such as *Humoresque* (1920), *The Bat* (1926), *The Animal Kingdom* (1932), and the complete *The Sea Hawk* (1924), *Napoleon* (1926), and *Sign of the Cross* (1932), have been found and preserved in recent years, and for that any cinema-goer must be grateful.

Discoveries of "lost" animated films haven't been quite in the same league, however. Probably the most exciting find in this area during the last decade was a group of silent "Alice Comedy" cartoons by Walt Disney. Although hardly exceptional, they're a lot of fun, and represent an important part of animation history. But cartoons such as these are about the best one can hope to find among the missing. Classics on the order of recently discovered live-action films like *Lucky Star* (1929), one of director Frank Borzage's greatest pictures, starring Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell, and *The Divine Lady* (1929), which garnered an Academy Award for director Frank Lloyd, simply aren't going to turn up.

There's a reason for this. The best-known cartoons come from the sound era, and most animated films from 1930 onward are in existence—for now—even if all of them haven't been preserved. For instance, you can see such top-notch efforts as the Ub Iwerks Comicolor cartoon, *Balloonland* (1935), and the Fleischer Color Classic, *Christmas Comes But Once a Year* (1936)—they're readily available in 16mm and video—even though they haven't been preserved in 35mm from the nitrate negatives.

But the lion's share of missing animated films are from the silent film era, a period when vast numbers of motion pictures were made which today remain largely unknown. Unlike for live-action features, there's little documentation in the way of published credits or contemporary reviews to cast a light upon animated shorts of the time. So it's easy to surmise that cartoons made by Bray, Messmer, and others whose names are familiar to us are more important than those by lesser-known producers and directors. Yet who's to say that films by Carl Francis Lederer, C. T. Anderson, and other forgotten animators whose work no longer is with us weren't just as good, if not better?

The last major discovery of silent films took place more than a decade ago in Alaska, where hundreds of reels literally were unearthed from beneath the ground. These went to the film archive at the Library of Congress, where those that needed to be preserved—and still could be—were. Unfortunately, many of the films were severely damaged, and not by nitrate decomposition. The frozen ground that had kept the nitrate base from deteriorating proved less hospitable for the film emulsion, as water seepage during spring thaws caused the image to be eradicated, sometimes in part, too often in whole. Although a good number of lost items were found and preserved at this time, none were major titles, and the water damage tempered the significance of the discovery.

Still, the Yukon "strike" generated a lot of press initially, which always is helpful in educating the general public about the need for film preservation. Yet it's possible that a less publicized film find from just last year will yield more treasures than the Alaskan lode.

In September, *Variety* reported on the repatriation to the United States from Australia of nearly two thousand nitrate films. Now, it's not as if these films suddenly materialized "down under." Unlike in Alaska, they were housed in proper storage vaults at the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, so they always were known to exist. But archivists here weren't generally aware of the contents of the collection, so, in that sense, what Australia held remained an unknown quantity.

And it seems as if Australia wasn't all that certain of what it held, either. When it first made repatriation overtures to archives in this country, it provided title lists which were both tantalizing and frustrating. Frequently, titles were garbled, incomplete, or simply missing. Nor was there indication if the films were complete or not. Of course, some are deteriorating, and probably more than indicated. These problems point out why Australia was looking to deaccess the films. Faced with limited resources to store and preserve films from its own country, it could not, in good conscience, hold on any longer to films from other countries that might prove unique, and decided upon repatriation as the responsible course of action.

Taking the list at face value, there are films in the collection of all types and from every period. Nickelodeon subjects from the turn of the century exist side-by-side with newsreels from WWII and feature films of 1950, the last year that nitrate film remained in general use. Probably half or better of the two thousand titles are from the sound era, roughly 1930 onward, and most of these are relatively common subjects

not in need of preservation.

The silent films are another matter, however. Again, nothing really spectacular has been found here, but there's lots of more than passing interest. Included are trailers to famous lost features such as *Beau Sabreur* (1928) with Gary Cooper, *Just Another Blonde* (1926) with Louise Brooks, and *The Patriot* (1928) with Emil Jannings, an Academy Award nominee for Best Picture directed by Ernst Lubitsch; individual episodes of missing serials like *Gloria's Romance* (1916) starring Billie Burke, and *Secret of the Submarine* (1916), the first propaganda serial; enticingly-titled primitives and trickfilms such as *Glimpses of Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1900), *If You Met Mr. Skinflint* (1905), *Forgiven in Death* (1910), *Anita of the Forest* (1914), and *Chang Lee's Auto Mule* (1912); several features, one of them being *The Flower of Doom* (1917), the only extant motion picture among many made at Universal by Rex Ingram, who later directed the silent classics *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921) and *Scaramouche* (1923); and numerous comic and dramatic short subjects, including missing films with Harold Lloyd, Mabel Normand, and Our Gang.

Although one might have hoped for more, there are a substantial number of animated films in the collection. Those that could be identified with certainty from the list comprise about five percent of the total, or more than one hundred titles. The majority are sound subjects, such as *The Karnival Kid* (1929) and *Cannibal Capers* (1930) from Disney, Warner's *The Daffy Doc* (1938) and *Prehistoric Porky* (1940), plus Fleischer cartoons, Van Beuren subjects, Terrytoons, Puppetoons, and other shorts from MGM, Walter Lantz, and Ub Iwerks. Although many of them are seldom seen, few, if any, will be needed for preservation purposes.

Silent animated films are lesser in number, but they are also more rare. Some of the titles are relatively common; however, these may be in better condition than what is known to exist, and thus constitute superior potential preservation materials. Other films may indeed be one-of-a-kind, but further research has to be done to determine that for certain. Also, there are unidentified items, either fragmentary or missing titles, which must be identified. Probably not all of these are needed for preservation, but at least some will be, representing either the last surviving prints or the best remaining ones.

So, are there any animated titles in the collection that beyond doubt need to be preserved? Well, if the lists can be trusted, there are a few. Among the silent films, two stand out. The first is listed as *Motoy Comedy: Jimmy Gets*

the *Pennant*. Motoy was a Chicago-based motion picture company that made puppet animation subjects during the late 'Teens and early 'Twenties. It is rumored that the company also made a five-reel animated feature at that time, although this never has been confirmed. Only a couple of Motoy shorts exist; if *Jimmy Gets the Pennant* proves to be one, it will be a welcome addition to the roster of a company that remains virtually unknown.

Also of preservation interest is a film listed as *The Devilish Dragon*, which it is hoped will turn out to be *Baron Bragg and the Devilish Dragon* (1922). This was a silhouette animation subject by Tony Sarg, the best-known practitioner of the art after Lotte Reiniger. Between 1921 and 1923, he produced seventeen "Shadowgraphs" under the series title "Tony Sarg's Almanac." Approximately a half-dozen of these are known to survive; three have been preserved in 35mm by the Academy Film Archive of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. *Baron Bragg and the Devilish Dragon* appears to be the first in a short series featuring the Baron character.

Apart from the silents, identified among the sound cartoons is the most interesting item of all. Back in the early 'Thirties, there was a twelve-cartoon series called "Toby the Pup," which was directed by Dick Huemer for release by RKO. Only one of these is known to exist, and that is in fragmentary form. Included among the Australian inventory is *Circus Time* (1932), the sixth Toby cartoon. If the print turns out to be complete and in good condition, it might prove one of the more exciting finds in the entire Australian collection.

Several months ago, all of the nitrate materials were shipped to the Library of Congress. From there, some of the films are being distributed to other archives in the United States which have indicated interest in specific titles. Each archive must then check the films for condition and completeness, determine whether or not specific films need to be preserved, and, if they do, come up with the money and the time to ensure that happens. For many unique films, this may never take place. That bleak prospect might hold true for the cartoons, as well.



If you're interested in supporting animation preservation, or learning more about it, write:

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Jere Guldin is shown here in a typical pose for an archivist...knee deep in hard work!

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An introduction to some of the places where animation fans "hang-out" in the so-called "Information Superhighway".

by Michael Russell

I'm sure most have heard of the so-called "Information Superhighway". You may not even know what it means or encompasses. However, if you are an animation creator, producer, studio, or fan there may be a reason to learn more and "get connected."

What is it?

One aspect of the so-called Information Superhighway is the vast network of computers and on-line services it includes.

The oldest and largest network of computers is the Internet. The Internet started as a government sponsored network connecting certain government agencies, many universities, and research companies. Today, the Internet has over 20 million users spanning the whole world.

The on-line services are large computer centers that provide communications, information, and entertainment services to subscribers. There are many on-line services, with the largest including CompuServe, America Online, and Delphi. All of these on-line services provide various levels of connection to the Internet.

Prodigy (a joint venture of Sears and IBM and the largest on-line service provider) currently has limited access to the Internet; but additional access is planned. Prodigy was designed for the home market and provides excellent on-line encyclopedias, newspaper databases, sports and investment resources, and a friendly user interface. Because of its limited Internet access, I will not discuss Prodigy any further.

What is available?

Internet

The Internet's value comes from the wealth of information provided voluntarily or as a service by its users. The primary facilities for getting and contributing information are: electronic mail (e-mail), file transfer protocol (FTP), World-Wide Web (WWW or just Web), and network news (newsgroups). There are other facilities available, but the above are the more commonly used.

E-mail provides a means for you to send a note to another person. You would use e-mail to carry on a private conversation with another person.

Some information, like images or long documents, is too large to send by e-mail or post to a newsgroup (described later), is stored on one or more computers. By using FTP, you can get a copy of this information and store it on your computer for later use.

The Web is the newest facility that provides

a friendlier way to get information off the Internet. Information is organized and formed into hypertext documents that are best read using a Web browser (a software program that understands the hypertext document format). Most new information is being added using this facility, but currently the amount of animation information is very small.

Network news, also known as USENET, is the facility where people with a common interest or hobby can exchange notes. Network news consists of a hierarchy of newsgroups with each newsgroup devoted to a single topic. These newsgroups are like forums or bulletin board services (BBS). Unlike e-mail which is read by just the recipient, a note posted to a newsgroup can be read by anyone who can access and wants to read that newsgroup. I believe the newsgroups are the best places to start when searching for animation information on the Internet. The people that provide files for FTP or Web retrieval often advertise in the newsgroups.

As of 6 January 1995, the following animation related newsgroups were available. Keep in mind, not all on-line service providers carry all newsgroups. Also, since anyone can create a newsgroup, new ones may exist by the time you read this.

alt.animation.spumco

Anything about John K's studio, Spumco.

alt.animation.warner-bros

Anything about the Warner Bros animation studio, Looney Tunes, and collecting Warner Bros. merchandise.

alt.ascii-art.animation

Fan created artwork made using letters and numbers.

alt.binaries.pictures.anime

Fan created artwork or scanned pictures from Anime.

alt.binaries.pictures.cartoons

Fan created artwork or scanned pictures from cartoons and comics.

alt.binaries.sounds.cartoons

Fan created or captured sounds or songs from cartoons.

alt.disney.collecting

Anything about collecting Disneyana.

alt.fan.disney.afternoon

Anything about the Disney TV Animation series like *Darkwing Duck*, *Aladdin*, *Duck Tales*, etc.

alt.tv.animanlacs

Anything about the Warner Bros. series, *Animanlacs*.

alt.tv.beavis-n-butthead

Anything about the MTV series, *Beavis and Butthead*.

alt.tv.brothers.grunt.sucks

Anything about the MTV series, *The Brothers Grunt*.

alt.tv.duckman

Anything about the USA Network series, *Duckman*.

alt.tv.eek-the-cat

Anything about the Fox Saturday morning series, *Eek! the Cat*.

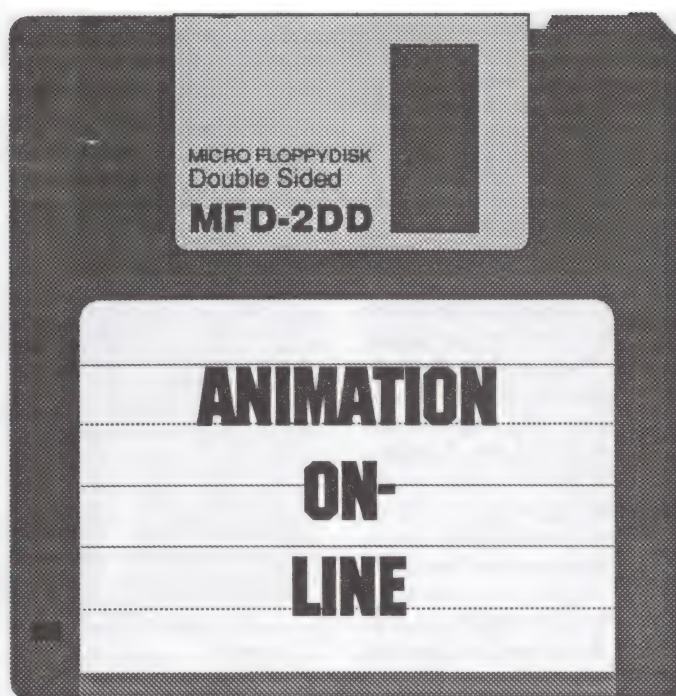
alt.tv.liquid-tv

Anything about the MTV series, *Liquid-TV*.

alt.tv.ren-n-stimpy

Anything about the Nickelodeon series, *Ren and Stimpy*.

alt.tv.simpsons



Anything about the FOX Network series, *The Simpsons*.

alt.tv.simpsons.itchy-scratchy

A special subgroup about the sub-cartoon in *The Simpsons*, *Itchy and Scratchy*.

alt.tv.taz-mania

Anything about the Warner Bros. series, *Taz-mania*.

alt.tv.tiny-toon

Anything about the Warner Bros. series, *Tiny Toon Adventures*.

alt.tv.tiny-toon.fandom

Originally a special subgroup of *Tiny Toon Adventures* fans who have a certain fondness for the series' female characters; it has grown to be a general group for any fans having an excessive fondness for any series' characters.

comp.graphics.animation

A technical group on how to produce animation on a computer.

ibm.ibm.pc.animatio

A technical group on how to produce animation specifically on an IBM-compatible PC.

rec.arts.animation

Anything about animation in general, theatrical releases, and TV series not covered by its own newsgroup(s).

rec.arts.anime

Anything about Japanese animation (Anime).

rec.arts.anime.info

Where to find specific information about Anime.

rec.arts.anime.marketplace

Where to buy and exchange Anime.

rec.arts.anime.stories

Suggestions, reviews, and contributions of Anime.

rec.arts.disney

Anything about Disney; parks, animation, collecting, etc.

CompuServe

CompuServe is one of the oldest and most full-featured of the commercial on-line services. In addition to hundreds of its own forums and databases, CompuServe provides e-mail exchange with the Internet and access to the Internet's newsgroups.

In addition to providing access to many of the Internet's newsgroups, CompuServe also has its own animation related forums. The following forums are available (the command to get to the forum is given in parenthesis).

Comics/Animation Forum (GO COMICS)

Anything about comics, animation, and Japanese animation. Specific subgroups include: General, News and Reviews, Collecting, Japanimation, Animation, Industry Issues, and Meetings & Cons.

Animation Vendor A Forum (GO ANVENA)

A technical forum where a few animation software vendors support their products.

Computer Animation Forum (GO COMANIM)

Discussions about how to create and work with computer animation, particularly on the PC, Macintosh, and Amiga platforms.

Showbiz Forum (GO SHOWBIZ)

General discussions about films and television. One subgroup is Animation/SpecialFX where discussions about how animation and special effects are used in films and television.

America Online

America Online (AOL) is a relatively new commercial on-line service, but has grown to be nearly as large as CompuServe. Its growth is partly due to its easy to use graphical front-end and its relatively lower costs. AOL provides e-mail exchange with the Internet and access to many of the Internet's newsgroups.

Like CompuServe, AOL provides its own forums. There is the Toon Talk forum where discussions about any cartoons take place. In addition, the Cartoon Network has an information forum on AOL that includes information about major cartoon characters, the network itself, the studios, and program schedules.

Delphi

Delphi is a smaller commercial on-line service, but it does provide full function access to the Internet. At present, Delphi does not provide access to all of the Internet's newsgroups, and it does not provide a graphical Web browser (its Web browser is text only).

However, Delphi, like the others, provides its own forums. The following animation-related forums can be found in the Custom Forums section.

052 Comics Forum

Will include discussions about comic book characters used in cartoons.

101 Disney

Will include discussions about Disney cartoons.

316 Animation Gallery

Anything about animation art.

Who participates?

Since the on-line services' original audience were college students and professionals, it is easy to understand that most "old-timers" on-line are computer literate, and have established a certain etiquette on these services. However, with the ease of access provided by service providers like America Online, the on-line world now includes a much wider audience from high-school students to general business professionals and college students from other disciplines than computers or engineering.

Also, the services are world-wide. This means you could be exchanging notes with fellow animation fans in Australia or Japan or Germany.

The best news for fans and animation professionals is the slow growth in the number

of studios, creators, producers, and others who are getting "connected". For example, Disney provided short video clips with sound from *The Lion King* on CompuServe. It has been reported that Warner Bros. Animation routinely monitors the Internet newsgroup, "alt.tv.animaniacs", to find out what fans like and don't like. And, Fox has a dedicated forum on Delphi (GO FOXTALK) where fans can post comments about series.

I hope the level of participation by the studios and artists will continue to increase.

Anything to beware of?

With something as large and essentially uncontrolled as the Internet, it is possible to find nearly anything one would want. I do not advocate any type of censoring of what is on the Internet, but you should be aware of what you could encounter. A small number of newsgroup conversations may contain immature or vulgar statements. Most newsgroup reader software provides a facility, commonly called kill criteria, to automatically ignore notes if it contains certain keywords or sent by certain users. Also, it is possible to encounter fan artwork or modified scanned images that could be rated R or NC-17. Fortunately, most site operators take care to put these images in a separate directory to pre-warn what type of material resides therein.

The success of the Internet and the other on-line services has been a result of the cooperation and shared goals of the user community. However, with the massive growth of these services over the last two years, it is understandable that the boundaries of good taste and etiquette are being tested and stretched. Forewarned is to be prepared.

Also, because the Internet is not a single item under the control of a single organization, there are no controls over the information made available. Thus, there are no assurances about the accuracy or availability of data. The best advice — learn by experience who and where are the reliable information providers.

How to get connected?

Probably the easiest way to get connected is through an on-line service provider like CompuServe, America Online, or Delphi. I am not recommending any particular service provider. I personally use three different providers because each has something unique to offer that I regularly use. Here is how to get in contact with these services:

CompuServe Information Service; PO Box 20212; Columbus, OH 43220. To sign up call (800) 848-8199. For general information call (614) 457-0802. The basic service fee is \$9/month plus an hourly charge when accessing forums and newsgroups. CompuServe can be accessed using ASCII terminal emulation or

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ANIMATO! Book Review

Walt Disney: The FBI Files

Walt Disney: The FBI Files by Richard L. Trethewey (Rainbo Animation Art, 8 Duran Court, Pacifica, CA 94044-4231, \$23.95 includes postage. Phone Orders [Visa/MC] from [415] 359-0221 or [800] 647-5085.

Reviewed by Karl Cohen

If you are interested in the career of Walt Disney, or are curious to see what is in an FBI file on somebody our government liked, this is a fascinating book to own. Trethewey has reproduced about 200 pages from Disney's file. Most of the pages are placed in chronological order and he has provided some basic background information to each section of the book. He also discusses how Mark Eliot exaggerated and misinterpreted facts in the file when he wrote his fictitious biography *Walt Disney: Hollywood's Dark Prince*.

The file begins in 1963 when Disney presented the FBI a set of his fingerprints, and ends a few years after his death in 1966. Probably the biggest surprise in it are hints at Disney's special relationship with the FBI in the 1950's and 1960's. There are also a series of pages on how the FBI spied on Disney's studio to find out how the FBI was going to be portrayed in two features.

The pages from the 1940's include three different views of the strike at Disney's studio. In 1941, Disney gave the FBI an account that is totally different from the one he presented to the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) in 1947. The full text of his testimony is included. There is also a statement from the Screen Cartoonists Guild that contradicts Disney's HUAC testimony that the strike was not a labor issue, but an attempt by the Communist Party to take over his studio. The union contends the strike was about labor issues, while Disney's account of the strike in 1941 was so vague it wasn't clear what he thought the issues were.

There are also a series of documents from the 1940's concerning the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals. Disney was a founder (1944) and vice president of this anti-Communist organization. Press clippings show how the mainstream press simply reported basic facts about the group while the liberal and radical press attacked the conservative association and Disney.

There are other items from the period that range from a news item about Negro objections to the studio making *Song of the South*, to one of



the mysterious blacked-out pages in the file that has something to do with the governments investigation of communists in the film industry.

Pages from the 1950's have little or nothing to do with Disney's politics. Over 200 pages of the file concern the studio making four films on the FBI's crime lab for "The Mickey Mouse Club." The memos show how the studio pitched the project to the FBI, tell why the bureau rejected Disney's offers and explain why they finally changed their minds and let the films be made. The FBI was given script approval and made changes before the films were shot.

Other pages from the 1950's range from news clippings about Disney getting awards to several requests for security checks. The file does not indicate whether or not Disney was invited to the White House and other government functions after the FBI answered the requests.

The big surprise in the file is that Disney was approved by the bureau as a Special Agent in Charge-Contact on January 12, 1955. Memos indicated he was a SAC - Contact at the time of his death. What the file doesn't tell us is what if anything he did in that capacity.

Trethewey's text goes into detail about Disney's probable roll as a SAC - Contact. Trethewey quotes my *Animato!* review of Marc Eliot's *Walt Disney: Hollywood's Dark Prince* (Fall, 1993) and provides other information that suggests the title was not unique and was largely an honorary designation for friends of the FBI

whom they could call upon for information and assistance if needed. He finds nothing to indicate Disney was a spy or informant.

Much of the file from the 1960's deals with an investigation of the Disney Studio to find out how the FBI was going to be portrayed in the feature *Moon Pilot*. The file indicates the methods the FBI used in their failed attempt to get a copy of the script without Disney knowing what they were up to. Hoover's negative reaction to the feature is preserved along with an anonymous handwritten note that says "I am amazed Disney would do this. He has probably been infiltrated." There is also a similar FBI investigation to find out how the FBI was going to be portrayed in the feature *That Darned Cat*.

The book contains information about other events in Disney's life that have nothing to do with his career as an animation or feature film producer. He sent a telegram of support to Samuel Goldwyn when Goldwyn was fighting a theater chain in Nevada (1944). There are lots of news clippings including one from *Variety* in which Disney says television is Hollywood's "blessing in disguise" (1957). There are memos about his death, and a note from an individual who thought they saw a swastika in a Disney comic strip from 1940.

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Hearing Voices:

Somethin' Goofy's Goin' On!

ANIMATO!'s voice detective is hot on the trail of the case of the substitute Goofy

by Hames Ware

Of all the voice mysteries of 1940s' cartoons, the most baffling, fascinating (and thus also my favorite) voice mystery has its beginnings in the mid-1930s, if I'm correct, at Warner Brothers. But, let's begin where there is clarity...in the last years of that decade, 1938-39, and at Disney, rather than Warner's.

For it is in 1939 that former circus clown, novelty musician, and jack of all trades, Vance Colvig, better known as "Pinto," began to phase out his best remembered role in animated cartoons - serving as the delightfully lovable voice of Goofy - so integral to the rise in status of this originally peripheral character named Dippy Dawg to becoming the third player of the Disney equivalent of the Three Musketeers: Mickey, Donald and Goofy.



The real Goofy. Caricature by Dan Gordon of Pinto Colvig when Colvig was working at the Fleischer Studios

The first question then we might ask is having achieved such hallowed status, why would Colvig choose to leave the security of the Disney organization just as it and he were poised to go to new heights?

We may never fully know the answer to this first question (Colvig's obscure, but also talented, son Vance Junior died within the past few years) but there's no question where Pinto went to the Fleischer Florida studios, paralleling a similar move made by an equally secure cartoon writer-voice man at Warner's, Tedd Pierce (and needless to say many other cartoon veterans from a myriad of studios on both coasts).

The most obvious assumption as to why both Colvig and Pierce pulled up stakes and joined Fleischer would be that they were offered creative and financial incentives they couldn't refuse. If the former is indeed the case, then it could be said that Pierce's paid off, while Colvig's wonderful vocal talent seems to have been utterly wasted. (Like Jack Mercer, Colvig was capable of doing voices other than the one particular star voice he became known for, but also like Mercer's non-Popeye voices, none of Colvig's other voices came close to being in the league of Goofy.)

Though, as at Disney, Colvig filled several roles at Fleischer's. His voice work mostly fell into two wasted area virtually any voice person could have rendered: speeded-up voices (Gabby in *Gulliver's Travels* and Gabby shorts); and pseudo-gruff voices (as in his handful of Bluto appearances in 1939 and '40, such as *Nurse Mates* and *Fightin' Pals*).

His departure agreement at Disney's probably precluded his using his Goofy voice, though he came close in such Warner's cartoons as 1939's *Snowman's Land* and *Hobo Gadget Band*. If Colvig doesn't seem to show up at Fleischer's until 1939, why did I pick 1938 to begin the opening part of this mystery?

Well, if one listens to the 1938 Disney shorts in which Goofy is featured, it will become clear that Colvig is replaced at least on the last three shorts that year. In fact, for the next four years, the Disney Archives begin to credit the voice to at least two different unknowns (as



Pinto's principal character while at Fleischer's was the bragging town crier Gabby from *Gulliver's Travels*.

discovered by British animation historian Graham Webb), but the archives do not always match reality. For instance, Colvig is not doing Goofy in 39's *Goofy and Wilbur*.

At their best, the so-called replacements for Colvig's Goofy voice just aren't up to Colvig's level, and yet another voice actor not at Disney was, and here then we come to the real mystery that is the focus of the rest of this issue's column!

In 1941 in Walter Lantz's *Man's Best Friend* and most especially in 1942's MGM *Bats in the Belfry* and Avery's 1943 classic *One Ham's Family* a voice is heard that is so close to Colvig's own that all but the most discerning would probably go to court to testify on behalf of it being Colvig himself!

But, to those who listen closely, it will become evident that just as in the case when Willard Waterman replaced Hal Peary as the Great Gildersleeves on radio, the nuances and subtle differences that made the original voice person original are missing or not as quite as effective in his replacement (an exception would be the subject of the last column).

In *Bat in the Belfry*, the pseudo-Colvig voice person even manages to duplicate Colvig's hiccup. It is truly one of the best jobs of mimicry I have ever heard. The great Mel Blanc had been asked to mimic Colvig in Warner's *Jeepers Creepers* in 1939, and did a pretty good job. (I contend, though Graham Webb disagrees, that the real Colvig can be heard doing at least one line in *Jeepers Creepers*: "There's someone at the door.")

But there's never any question when Mel does a voice, mimicry or not, it's still Mel. "Pseudo-Colvig" is so good, though, if Pinto Colvig had stayed in Florida much longer he might have been out of a job in Hollywood. Why on earth Disney's did not glom onto "Pseudo-Colvig" is still another mystery. He

could have slid into the Goofy role without missing a beat. As it was, Goofy at Disney during Colvig's absence grew almost mute for want of Colvig's special touch.

This permanent replacement actually did occur in old time radio when Cliff Arquette (later television's Charlie Weaver) was replaced as the role of "The Old Timer" he originated on *Fibber McGee and Molly* without his knowledge!

Most voice people of the old school felt uncomfortable at best when asked to "do so and so's voice." Mel Blanc often related at how uneasy he felt being asked to try to take over Elmer Fudd's voice when Arthur Q. Bryan passed away. In fact, Blanc often said in interviews that all his voices were originals, or at least that was his intent.

Who is doing Pinto Colvig's voice in the 1941-3 period, especially at MGM, when Pinto was in Florida? Well, here goes my best answer, and again I must say Graham Webb's excellent research, keen ear, and dogged determination not to declare a voice case solved until all the facts make it so reminds me this is only guess work.

The best place to begin to unravel the pseudo-Colvig mystery voice, as far as I'm concerned, is to study closely the two MGM cartoons already mentioned, *Bats in the Belfry*, Avery's *One Ham's Family*, and *The Early Bird Dood It*, where the mystery artist performed a Lou Costello-voiced worm.

First of all, since the Colvig voice itself is so perfectly mimicked, one has to turn to other voices the voice actor might have done to try to track who might it be.

In *Bats in the Belfry*, although they overlap, there's a distinct possibility that Bat #1's voice is also rendered by the Colvig-esque person. Bat #1's voice is well done, but nothing particularly special. However, in listening closely to it, Graham, correctly I believe, heard in it connections utilized by MGM and Avery, specifically the one heard in *Lonesome Lenny*, for instance.

While Graham tracked the voice actor forward in time through pure happenstance, I believe I stumbled across earlier work by this voice actor containing precursors of his later work.

If one listens closely to the lead voice in the 1935 Warner Brothers cartoon *The Country Mouse* and compares it to the Costello-voiced worm, I believe that one can hear the same person doing both.

As to *One Ham's Family*, for my part it is truly one of the most interesting cartoons vocally ever made. First off, the pseudo-Gildersleeve, heard to best advantage in 1945's *Hare Conditioned*, can be heard narrating in something closer to his own natural voice, then he later portrays the wolf using the Gildersleeves

voice itself. Papa Pig is done a la Colvig, and Junior Pig is a wonderfully rendered Red Skelton "Mean Widdle Kid." (Mama Pig is probably Sara Berner.)

Though Graham Webb and I have gone 'round and round over this cartoon for years, we've both finally come to believe that at least one other and perhaps both other voices are also rendered by the Colvig-esque person, the Skelton, and even more likely the Gildersleeves one.

Why?

Well, budgets for cartoon casts usually encouraged producers to hire voice artists who could double or triple their voice roles in a single cartoon. That's why when Mel Blanc and Sara Berner showed up at Warner Brothers saying "I can do them all!" Leon Schlesinger listened, and soon, Billy Bletcher, Bernice Hansen and other supporting voices were heard with lessening frequency.

So then, the Colvig-esque Papa Pig voice is only heard in the first part of the cartoon, then the dialogue is carried by Junior Pig, a la Red Skelton, while the narrator doubles a la Gildersleeves as the wolf, there's a good chance that one person may be doing all the male voices.

Graham painstakingly compared the Gildersleeves voice to the Bat #1 voice in *Bats in the Belfry*, and believes them to be done by the same person. I absolutely agree, so the Gildersleeves person is versatile. If the Colvig-esque person is heard opposite the Bat #1, and the Gildersleeves person in two different cartoons, there is a strong possibility that the Bat #1 and the Gildersleeves person may be also doing the Colvig-esque voice.

Now, then the final piece of this convoluted puzzle can be found over at Lantz in 1941's *What's Cookin'*, also known as *Pantry Panic*. And it's the piece that may actually provide a name for whom I believe this voice artist to be!

But, remember, this hypothesis rests upon accepting that all these voices discussed were rendered by the same person.

Well, in Lantz's *What's Cookin'* one line only is rendered a la Bat #1 by a peripheral character, and it's hard to believe Lantz would have paid a second voice actor to come in and read a throw-away line when one of the featured voice people could have easily have done it. (To be sure, some voice greats were hired for just one line. Phil Kramer as the Cuckoo's voice in *Porky's Hotel* comes immediately to mind.)

And who are the featured voices in *What's Cookin'*? Well, there's Woody, of course, whose voice is speeded up and thus undetectable in that form, and then there is the antagonist of the cartoon, a cat who speaks with a froggy voice.

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THE MANY LIVES OF FELIX THE CAT

The silent cartoon star prepares for another comeback on television

by Mike Lyons

Felix is animated proof that a cat really does have nine lives. Theseventysomethingfeline, who has been in film since the silent era, is more akin to the "Energizer Bunny": Felix keeps going, and going, and going.

What set Felix apart from other silent stars of animation is that while most characters in the pre-sound era were used for visual gags, Felix had a personality. "The important thing about Felix is that he was a distinctive character and not just a moving image," says John Canemaker, a noted animation historian and author of the book, *Felix: The Twisted Tale of the World's Most Famous Cat*. Canemaker also notes that this enhanced Felix's popularity, "He was very kinetic, but he also had a distinct personality that audiences identified with. They often went to the theatre to see Felix because of his personality and they came to know him through his series of films. He would react a certain way and audiences came to expect that. They knew he would think about his problems, and then, perhaps do the 'eureka!' gesture when he came to a solution, then his eyes would narrow and he would think some more."

Felix first came to life at the Pat Sullivan Studio in New York City. "Pat Sullivan was an entrepreneur, a producer par excellence," says Canemaker. "He was a noble fighter for his rights and his character and publicizing him to the nth degree."

A native of Sydney, Australia, Sullivan had struggled through many menial jobs before finally opening his studio in 1915. One of his first employees was a young, unassuming artist named Otto Messmer. Messmer was a native of New Jersey, who learned his craft through an art correspondence course and cut his teeth in such markets as catalogue illustrating and free-lance cartooning. After seeing Winsor McCay's *Gertie the Dinosaur*, Messmer was inspired to pursue a career in animation and got a job at Universal studios where he learned the craft. By the time Messmer came to the Sullivan

studio, he was a pro.

Otto Messmer and Pat Sullivan were complete opposites in every way, which may explain why their working relationship flourished from the beginning. "One had what the other didn't," notes John Canemaker. "I think they had a symbiotic professional relationship. Messmer was a quiet artist, who wanted nothing better than to do his work and not deal with business problems. He could organize a production, he could create stories, he could create characters and he could direct other animators in his gentle way."

Pat Sullivan, on the other hand, thrived on the business end of running a studio and also lived much of his life in the fast lane, which led to an addiction to alcohol. His first biggest coup for the studio was establishing a contract to provide cartoons for the "Paramount Magazine", a semi-weekly theatrical short subject. The first of these was entitled *Feline Follies* (1919), the story of a romantic courtship between two cats. The main character of *Follies* is a black cat named Master Tom, who was actually the prototype for Felix. John Canemaker says of *Feline Follies*, "Almost all of the elements that would be signature motifs, visually and personality-wise, for Felix throughout the entire decade of the twenties are in that film from the very first scene." Many of Master Tom's actions in *Feline Follies*, such as his conspiratorial



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glances at the audience and his tail detaching to form question marks as he ponders a situation, would later become staples of Felix's personality.

It was Otto Messmer who injected Felix with this unique personality, sense of comic timing, and a knack for problem solving. From 1919 through 1929, Felix would star in 177 cartoon shorts. The films made during this time contain some of the most creative and surrealistic images in animation history. In each of these shorts, Otto Messmer showed a distinctive style, which John Canemaker says "celebrated cartoon as cartoon". "There are two paths in animation," explains Canemaker. "One is the McCay-Disney path, which says: this is not a cartoon, this is real and I'm going to convince you of its reality. I'm going to create an illusion of life and an illusion of nature and a caricature of reality and you're going to believe in these characters so much that you may even want to cry. The other path is the Emil Cohl-Tex Avery-Otto Messmer path that says: this is a cartoon and nothing but a cartoon,

but you are going to be captivated by the magic that I can do and I'm going to do things that live action could never do and you're still going to believe in my world."

Throughout the decade of the Twenties, while Otto Messmer's creativity continued to flourish, Felix exploded into popular culture. He was the first cartoon character to be mass-merchandised with product "tie-ins", in 1923 a weekly Felix comic strip began, (which was drawn by Otto Messmer), and over in Europe, where Felix was a phenomena, the cat inspired a hit song entitled "Felix Kept On Walking".

While all was well on the outside, there was much turmoil inside the Pat Sullivan studio. A heated contract dispute arose between Sullivan and the films' distributor, Margaret Winkler and Sullivan himself began to resent and was even "jealous" of Felix's popularity. Then in 1928, came what many consider to be the nail in the Sullivan Studio coffin, *Steamboat Willie*. Mickey Mouse and this new invention of synchronized sound were almost literally overnight sensations. It wasn't long before Mickey began to eclipse Felix in popularity. For reasons still unknown, Pat Sullivan refused to convert to sound. "He did eventually put soundtracks on the old Felix [cartoons] and some of the new ones," says Canemaker. "But, it was too little, too late and it was done poorly. Walt Disney was creating soundtracks that would work with the action in his films, in total synchronization. Whereas, the dreadful tracks that were put on to Felix [cartoons], were out of synch, they had lousy music and a tiny attempt at dreadful voices. It was a poor job all around and Disney was moving leaps and bounds ahead."

As Felix continued his steady decline, so did Sullivan, who slowly slipped into an

alcoholic depression. To make matters worse, Sullivan's wife, Marjorie, died in 1932, after falling from a second floor apartment window, (a story that's still shrouded in mystery). This did not improve Pat Sullivan's state and by the following year his memory began to fade to the point where he couldn't even recognize Otto Messmer. Mr. Sullivan died on February 15, 1933 from a combination of chronic alcoholism and pneumonia.

This signaled the end of the Sullivan studio, but not of Otto Messmer's role in the Felix saga. He continued to draw the Felix comic strip and even had a second chance at directing Felix cartoons, when the Van Bueren studios bought the rights in the late 1930's. Messmer, however, passed on the chance to bring back the cat. Three new Felix shorts were made in 1936, *Felix the Cat and the Goose That Laid the Golden Eggs*, *Neptune Nonsense* and *Bold King Cole*, complete with sound and color, but they failed to attract audience attention. John Canemaker says, "Felix was old hat by then and it certainly wasn't the Felix that audiences remembered."

It would be twenty-five some odd years before Felix made another comeback, when an ex-Famous Studio animator named Joe Oriolo brought Felix into the strange new world of television. From 1959 through 1962, 260 five minute Felix cartoons were made, bringing back the cat and introducing a new cast of characters, including Rock Bottom, Poindexter and the Professor. Joe Oriolo's son, Don, recalls that unlike network animation, his father didn't have the largest budget to work with. "The only reason the series ever got done is because he took the most ridiculous deal known to man, he only got paid five grand an episode," says Oriolo. "That's five thousand dollars from soup to nuts!"

Even with this shoestring budget, Oriolo was able to accomplish a great deal, including expanding on the Felix everyone had come to know. In addition to a "bag of tricks" and a speaking voice (all the voices were supplied by Jack Mercer, the famed voice of Popeye), Oriolo also gave Felix a new, streamlined look that included longer legs. "He was looking for a character that was endearing to a younger audience," says Don. The television cartoons proved to be so popular that a whole new generation of children grew up oblivious to the old, silent Felix, and thought that Oriolo's version was, excuse the expression, the "cat's pajamas".

Joe Oriolo's introduction to Felix occurred when he took over the comic strip in the late forties from Otto Messmer. Don Oriolo notes that his father brought a new style to Felix, even then. "My father's [Felix] was a little rounder,



© Felix the Cat productions

softer, chubbier," he says. "Otto's was more angular and sharp featured." Through negotiations with Pat Sullivan's nephew, (who owned the rights to Felix), Joe Oriolo became a partner in Felix the Cat Productions, Inc., brought Felix to television and by 1971 was himself president of the company. Don, who carries the torch by serving as Senior Vice President of the company today, says that his father took a great deal of pride in the fact that he was able to revitalize Felix, "As he said in the Canemaker book, he's the godfather, or uncle of Felix, while Otto was the father."

A renewed interest in this "father" of Felix began to surface about twenty years ago. In the early Seventies, John Canemaker began researching animation history and as part of that research, he arranged what would be the first of numerous interviews with Otto Messmer. "The first interviews were kind of interesting, because he hadn't been asked the questions I was asking, in a long time," Canemaker remembers. "It was as if the cobwebs were being whisked away from his mind. With each interview, he would remember more and get stronger."

As memories would come flooding back to Otto Messmer, and as he became more visible and accessible to the public, his popularity began to grow, after years of relative obscurity. In 1976, John Canemaker produced a documentary entitled *Otto Messmer and Felix the Cat*, which included interviews with Messmer and "highlights" from the golden age of Felix. Articles about Messmer began to surface in various publications and there were retrospectives of Messmer's work at the Whitney Museum and the Museum of Modern Art.



© Felix the Cat Productions, Inc.

Otto Messmer who had never received any screen credit for the Felix shorts, (they were billed as "A Pat Sullivan Comic"), took his new found celebrity status in stride. John Canemaker says, "Sure he was a little bit overwhelmed by it, but he handled it in his own way and in his own good time." Canemaker also adds, "He did enjoy the recognition in his retirement age. It's sort of a vindication of a great artist getting his due."

Otto Messmer died in October of 1983, and two years later, the world would lose Joe Oriolo as well. Don remembers that before his father passed away, he told him that he wanted to keep Felix going, "He said to me, 'Look, I can't do it, but I would really like for you to carry this thing on.'" Don had been trying to get his father to create a feature film for Felix, and decided that would be the best way to carry on his father's legacy. Oriolo then dedicated a tremendous amount of time and energy to bring Felix to the big screen. The end result was 1989's *Felix the Cat: The Movie*, which Oriolo has mixed feelings about to this day. "It makes me feel good that I finished it," he says. "It doesn't make me feel good that it isn't the best I can do. But, I guess, no one is ever satisfied with what they do. I'm just happy that it kept things moving and alive with the character."

Oriolo continued public awareness of Felix, by not compromising the character through "selling out" or cheapening Felix's image. This integrity led to a deal with animator Phil Roman's



Felix's re-design by Joe Oriolo. © Felix the Cat Productions, Inc.

studio, Film Roman, for the production of fifty, five-second "bumpers", starring Felix, which now air Saturday mornings on CBS. The bumpers have proved to be so successful, that Film Roman is currently in a development deal with CBS to bring a regular Felix series to television this fall. Phil Roman, who produced and directed the bumpers himself, says, "What we're basing our new series on is really more of the Felix of the '20's or '30's. There are going to be things of the present, but done in a looser, cartoon form," adds Roman, who also notes,

"There's really nothing on television right now similar to what we're planning."

Roman's studio is most famous for bringing Garfield to the small screen and he says it's been fun to compare Felix to the lethargic feline. "Felix is a little bit different," he says. "He's a lot more energetic, he'll get into all different kinds of problems and situations that are a little broader." Roman also believes that while Felix may have such a distinct personality, it's his physical appearance that makes him interesting. "He's very appealing, just as a still image," says Roman. "And yet, from an animation point of view, he's animatable. You can move him around, change expressions and get him into different situations. So, as an animator, he's a challenge."

John Canemaker, echoes this sentiment, "There's something about a circular character with a big smile. It's one of the more

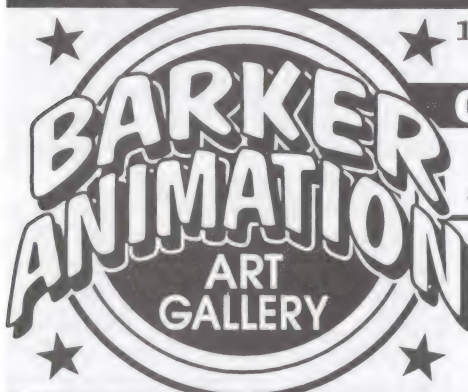
perfect icons."

This may be part of the reason that Felix, a simple, black and white cat, whose life spans from the silent age of film to the nascent years of television to the current animation resurgence, has endured for so long. This is one cat with a lot of lives left.



Mike Lyons is a Long Island-based freelancer who specializes writing about film.

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CLOBBERIN' TIME !

Marvel Comics guru Stan Lee speaks on the new programs featuring many of the characters he created

by Judith Reboy

Known throughout the comics industry as a pioneer, Marvel Comics founder Stan Lee has broadened his horizons from Marvel's goodwill ambassador to an active participant in bringing his characters to life in other media.

Although Marvel has dominated the comics field for decades, their success has been slow in transferring to television and film. Many of their characters, from Captain America and the Incredible Hulk to the Punisher and the original Spider-Woman, have been altered, to the point, adaptations.

Frustration over this sad state of events sent "Smiling Stan" to the West Coast, where he serves as co-producer of Marvel's animated projects, including *Marvel Action Hour*, *X-Men*, and *Spider-Man*.

"The problem is," he muses, "Movies and TV other than animation, we don't produce our own things... We license our characters to other companies. Although it's now our policy that we don't license them unless we have a strong say in what will be done with them."

Stan hopes that this arrangement will improve the quality of Marvel-based programs "unlike years ago when somebody would do a TV series based on our characters and we felt they weren't doing it correctly, but we had no recourse because we didn't have the right to say 'Hey, wait a minute! You can't do it that way!' So we're now a part of the process." Although he acknowledges that changes began when he headed West, Stan credits Arvi Arad, his co-producer on Marvel animated projects, as a driving force for quality control. Progress "has been happening in a much stronger way the last couple of years, since Arvi's been here."



Since Marvel still does not produce anything themselves other than animation, part of Stan's job is to help match creative teams with various projects, as well as to make sure that when artistic compromises are made, what he calls the "spirit" of the characters remain unchanged.

So why, then, on the new *Marvel Action Hour* is the Scarlet Witch so vastly different from her comic book self? Rather than appearing as the strong-willed leader of the Force Works team, she is basically subservient and decorative, spending more time flirting with friends and foes alike and carfigthing with Spider-Woman than making herself of any use whatsoever.

Stan sheepishly admits that while he created her thirty years ago, given the literally hundreds of characters in the Marvel Universe, he really couldn't remember some of the specifics of her personality.

It becomes immediately obvious that *Action Hour* is not Stan's primary concern at the moment. He becomes far more animated (pun intended) when talking about the new *Spider-Man*, which recently premiered on Fox.

The Fox Children's Network has had

tremendous success with the 'toon version of Marvel's *X-Men*, which has been a strong ratings second to *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* for the past year. Stan believes that *Spider-Man* will be another solid performer.

"I will yield to no man in my admiration for the *X-Men*, but I think *Spider-Man* is going to be a monster hit. The first show that we did... just got the greatest ratings and was so well talked about by everybody that saw it."

He says it was a conscious decision to portray the younger Peter Parker/Spider-Man of the 60's, rather than the older, more self-assured Peter of more recent years.

"We thought there were enough adult heroes around, and as the series goes on, year after year, we can always age Peter. Maybe by the third or fourth year, we'll age him." He adds with a slight laugh, "Maybe by the

tenth year, we'll age him a little more or marry him off. But if we started out with him the way he is today, there'd be no place to go from there."

However, the series will feature some of the familiar faces from the later, darker books, including the deadly Venom and Peter's girlfriend, Felicia Hardy (although not in her soldier of fortune identity, the Black Cat). How faithfully will they be rendered?

According to Stan, they will be fairly close to their printed selves. "Anything can be done if you do it with good taste, and we feel that we have good taste... There's no reason not to show a dark side. Lots of people have a dark side."

However, one of the most popular member of Spidey's rogues gallery will not appear anytime soon: Venom's whole nemesis/"offspring," Carnage.

"Carnage, I'm not sure of. We may or may not do Carnage. We won't do Carnage unless we can find a way to do it that we'll be satisfied with, and our audience will be satisfied with."

"One thing we never want to do is offend anyone. My policy has always been... I would never write any story that I wouldn't want my

own children to read, and I would certainly never put anything on television that I wouldn't want my own children to see. If we can find a way to do Carnage, great. And if we can't come up with that way, then we just won't do him."

That's not to say that Stan isn't fond of the character. "I love the name; I love his look. The kids are mad about him, so we're going to try and find a way that's exciting and won't be harmful to anyone or distasteful."

Stan credits the same formula that Marvel pioneered in the 1960's for the success of shows like *X-Men*. "I think the characterization is pretty well defined. You can understand the characters and believe in the characters even though they're very fantastic. It's really like an adventure soap opera. . . Like a superhero soap opera, which I think is the best formula for superhero stories."

He speaks surprisingly candidly about Marvel's two most recent failures in the feature film arena. He defends the screenplay for *Captain America* as "one of the best screenplays I have ever read." However, he is not blind to the problems with the finished product.

"Unfortunately, the movie itself was a somewhat low budget film, as you can probably guess. . . They shot it in Yugoslavia. For some reason, the finished product came in at two and a half hours. It would have been much too long. And they had to make a lot of cuts. [Author's note: I saw a longer version of the film, and while it was hardly Academy Award calibre, it was comparatively not bad.] And they were in a big hurry to finish it. It just wasn't done under ideal conditions, both from the point of view of budget and time. It's a shame, because, as I say, I thought the screenplay was brilliant." He indicated that there may be a larger budget Cap film in the future.

Stan's perspective on *The Fantastic Four* is even more interesting. "Again, it was a very, very low budget movie. It was made for the purpose, really, of the producer retaining his rights to the property. Because if he hadn't done that movie, he would have lost his rights, and I don't know, it had to do with a million lawyers and a lot of legal situations. It was never supposed to be seen by the public. I feel very bad for the director, and the actors and the people who worked on the movie, because they did their best, and they were a great bunch of people. . . It is a shame." He notes that *Home Alone* director Chris

Columbus is planning a big budget FF film in the near future.

He really isn't clear about the failure of the original pilot for *X-Men*, "Pryde of the X-Men." When no one picked it up, it ran unannounced on *Marvel Action Universe*, a syndicated package that ran briefly in the late 80's.

"I never know why people don't buy things that we are trying to sell them," he jokes, "because if they had any brains, they would buy everything that we offered."

He is very happy that his friend and the former head of Marvel Productions, Margaret Loesch, became the President of the Fox Children's Network, because she had tried unsuccessfully to sell "Pryde of the X-Men" to the networks. "Luckily," he adds, "When she became the President of Fox, proving that she wasn't a phoney, she had the courage of her convictions. She bought it herself, and the rest, as they say, is history."

And he is convinced that it's a match made in superhero heaven because Ms. Loesch "does have a feeling for this kind of story, this kind of product, and she has allowed us to do stories and do them in such a way that other networks might not let us do. I think what she has done is paved the way and she's made everyone realize that

these things are eminently doable."

This, of course, opens the conversation to the charges that *X-Men* and other such shows are too violent for children. Stan offers that he doesn't agree, but that "it's always been difficult for me to say. But then, when you're in this business, it sounds like you're being self-serving."

However, as proof, he adds that as he lectures at schools and auditoriums across the country, it doesn't appear that his creations are doing very much harm. "I cannot tell you how many teachers, college students, working adults — nice, normal people — come up to me and say 'Stan, I can't thank you enough for all the years of enjoyment Marvel Comics gave me' and 'How I loved those stories. They were so exciting.' I very rarely get letters from Death Row inmates who say 'It's all because I read your comics.'"

And really, any normal person realizes that it's fiction and you aren't supposed to emulate it. And if you're reading the right stuff, you'll always sympathize with the hero, who's the good guy trying to do the right thing. And if you're not a normal person, you might be adversely affected. . . But then, you might be adversely affected by anything. You can't protect

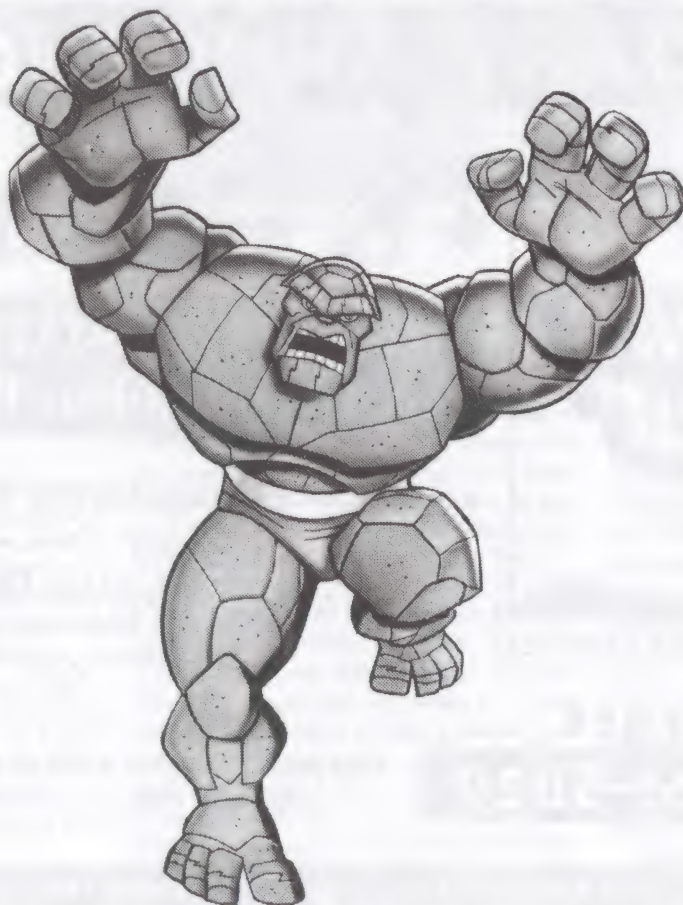
the world from people who are irrational, because they will be set off by anything."

His approach to the problem is to simply use a little common sense in determining what's appropriate. "I remember when I was a kid, all the kids in the neighborhood played cops and robbers. We played cowboys and Indians; we brandished toy pistols — 'Bang, bang you're dead.' Nobody said 'Hey, you shouldn't do that,' and none of us grew up to be killers."

It seems to be something in the human condition that you like to read. . . adventure stories, whether you're reading about Ulysses fighting the Cyclops or Robin Hood or King Arthur and the Crusades. It's just exciting, that's all."

And Stan is excited himself about the newest branch of Marvel Comics, which features licensed characters from other companies. The first to be published a few years ago were based on Nickelodeon/MTV characters *Ren and Stimpy*, *Rocko's Modern Life*, and *Beavis and Butthead*.

More recent additions include Disney titles such as *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Disney Afternoon*, *Gargoyles*, and the



The Thing as seen on the *Marvel Action Hour*. His voice is supplied by veteran actor Chuck McCann. (TM and © MARVEL Entertainment Group, Inc. All rights reserved.)

upcoming *Lion King*. And Savage Steve Holland recently told this writer that an *Eek! the Cat* title is on the way.

Stan says that, unlike many other licensed titles of days past, care is being taken care to keep the characters true to their cel counterparts. "You see, one thing that I've been complaining about in Hollywood [is that] a producer will buy a novel, let's say, that is a best seller. And then they'll do a movie version of it, and omit the very things that made it a best seller from the movie. The one thing we try never to do is omit the spirit and gestalt of the property that we're making a comic of."

He says that *Ren and Stimpy* in particular is very successful. He sees this new division as an important addition to the Marvel lineup, not only because it brings in people who don't read superhero titles, but also because they will appeal to younger readers.

And that is an important factor to the man who lectures that "Comics are sort of the last


defense against creeping illiteracy, because... a comic is the only thing that a kid will read voluntarily." He adds that kids will learn to read to better understand the pictures, and "And the beautiful thing is that nobody stops just with comic books. And once you can read, there's a whole world opened up to you."

But for now, cartoons are Stan's primary concern, and he notes with pride that he feels that *X-Men* and *Spider-Man* bring the Marvel experience to the television screen. However, he is also quick to defend some of the lower budget Marvel cartoons of the 1960's.

He has a fondness for the original *Spider-Man* cartoons despite their "primitive" animation, because the stories were very close to the comic book originals. He also enjoyed the oft-hated *Marvel Super Heroes*, merrily singing some of their cheerful theme songs as he talks. While he readily admits that "It was almost not even animation, but a series of still pictures strung together," but that he found it forgivable

because they were well written.

And what would he change if Dr. Doom loaned him his time machine? "I'd find a way to have the producers spend more money on them, because in animation, the whole gimmick is how much you pay for the cartoon. The more money you spend, the better the animation can be. It becomes more fluid. You can spend more money on the settings, on the layouts, on the storyboards, on the backgrounds, on everything. And you get a better looking product."

"If we feel that our stories are good, we feel our characters have great appeal, so as somebody involved in the creative end, I only wish we could make it look better. I want our animation to look better than Disney's!" 

Judith Rebov is a frequent contributor to **ANIMATO!**, and really does notice the personality changes in the Scarlet Witch!

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Face Behind the Voices:

Don Messick – Man for All Toons

by G. Michael Dobbs

When the Seventies situation comedy *The Duck Factory* cast the actor to play the fictitious animation studio's voice talent, for once Hollywood got it right. Don Messick, the man who along with the late great Daws Butler created many of the voices heard by two generations of television viewers, played the role.

Messick is the man responsible for the voices of the following characters: Boo Boo and Ranger Smith on *Yogi Bear*; Pixie of Pixie and Dixie; Dr. Benton Quest and Bandit on *Jonny Quest*; Scooby and Scrappy on *Scooby Doo*; and Papa Smurf on *The Smurfs*. Who was the narrator on all those old Hanna-Barbera cartoons like *Huckleberry Hound*? That's Don Messick as well. But, that's just scratching the surface. You can also add to the list Hamton on *Tiny Toon Adventures*, Astro on *The Jetsons*, and Droopy on *Droopy and Dripple*. So far, Messick has performed on over 40 animated television series.

The soft-spoken voice actor Messick (whose regular speaking voice sounds very much like his Dr. Quest characterization), describes himself as "reticent and an introvert," but he is obviously proud of his long career in animation. He spoke to ANIMATO! from his home in southern California.

Messick started his show business career at the tender age of 13 in his native Maryland as a ventriloquist. Performing with his dummy "Woody DeForest" at area events such as Lion's Club meetings led to his own weekly radio show in Salisbury, Maryland by the age of 15. Acting as both the writer and the performer on that show, Messick discovered his voice's flexibility. Rather than performing impersonations or impressions, he began developing his ability to create and perform various different characterizations.

"I loved radio. That really was my first love," Messick recalled fondly.

After high school, Messick moved to Baltimore, and attended an acting school for two years, and performing in little theater productions.

"Studying acting I realized how bad I must



Don Messick and some of the characters he voiced during his long career in animation.

have been on the radio," Messick said with a laugh, who worked on eliminating his eastern Maryland shore accent.

His acting training was interrupted by a 20 month stint in the Army. Assigned to Special Forces, Messick found himself traveling around the country entertaining troops. The Army brought him to the west coast, and after he was discharged, he went to Los Angeles to continue his fledgling show business career. Messick appeared in a few plays, and eventually attended a radio workshop for ex-GIs which included performing in a weekly radio play.

His connection with the radio workshop led to the role of Raggedy Andy in a radio version of the popular children's stories. That show ran 39 weeks, and was derailed by a musicians' strike. Another show business gig brought Messick back to the east coast. In New York City, Messick survived an experience that many young actors suffer; extreme poverty. Although he appeared in several off-Broadway productions, Messick recalled that in order to make ends meet, he sold blood at \$5.00 a pint.

His career took an upswing when he

received a message from animation legend Bob Clampett. Clampett had left Warner Brothers to form his own production company, and had a hit with a puppet show entitled *Time for Beany*. Clampett had developed a new puppet show, *Buffalo Billy*, and wanted Messick in the cast.

Clampett put Messick under contract, and brought him back to California. After rehearsing the show for several months in Clampett's garage (in which he had a puppet stage set up), Clampett sold the show to Fanny Farmer Candy, and Messick returned to New York for the show's 13 week run.

Another puppet series then brought him back to Los Angeles. Messick noted that local stations eventually believed originating a live puppet show was too expensive, and instead developed children's show featuring old theatrical shorts hosted by "cartoon jockies."

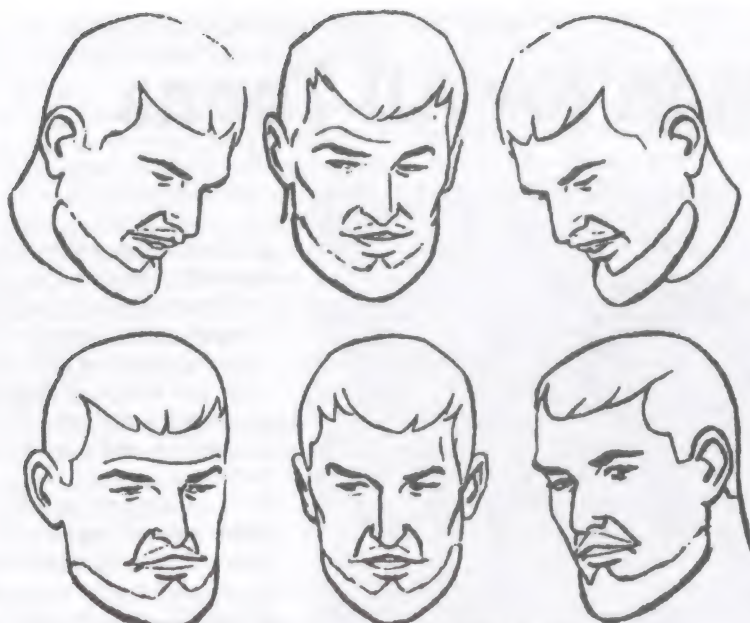
With the puppet shows on the wane as was dramatic radio, Messick made the rounds to

animation studios looking for voice work. He was unaware that like dramatic radio, theatrical cartoons were also endangered.

MGM eliminated their animation unit in 1957, and long-time partners and Oscar-winners William Hanna and Joseph Barbera found themselves unceremoniously fired. After securing a deal with Screen Gems, the television arm of Columbia Pictures, Hanna and Barbera produced their first made-for-television cartoon series *Ruff 'n' Reddy*. Hanna and Barbera remembered Messick from an interview with him, and hired him and Daws Butler for the show.

Although there had been earlier animated series made for television, *Ruff 'n' Reddy* was a hit, and in no small way the vocal team of Daws Butler and Don Messick was responsible.

For Messick the association with the studio is one that continues to this day. Hanna-Barbera was "like a second home. Some of the other actors would say to me, 'Don, you have a room here?' It really was, and has been [a second home] although it is a little different under the



HEAD MODELS

DR. QUEST

A model sheet for Dr. Quest by Jonny Quest creator Doug Wildey. Messick has a wide vocal range; from Dr. Quest's baritone to Pixie the Mouse's squeak!

new ownership."

As the studio prospered, Messick was kept busy appearing in series after series.

At Hanna-Barbera, directors liked assembling the complete cast of vocal performers, if possible, rather than record the actors individually. Messick likes this ensemble performance approach.

"I found it was better to work that way because of my experience as an actor in radio and on the stage. I like to feel the relationship of the other people I'm working with; so that we

can play with each other. As Daws Butler once put it, working with me was like 'chamber music.' We performed and each [of us] kind of anticipating the reaction the other would have."

Both Messick and Butler sneaked in some ad libs. "They don't discourage that sort of thing unless it gets out of hand. All of us have at one time or another ad libbed. Daws would say, 'Well, Snaggle Puss wouldn't say it that way,' or I would say [a line] would not be a natural way for Boo Boo to speak."

Messick views his job, not just as supplying a voice for a cartoon character but as acting.

"It's like acting, theatrical acting." He noted that he and others would get involved with a character as a performer. For example, he recalled how Casey Kasem would often change Shaggy's lines while recording *Scooby Doo*.

Messick matter-of-factly states that he does not do impersonations, and said he was never asked to base a characterization on an established voice, something the late Daws Butler did a number of times. While Messick readily admits that Hanna-Barbera patterned Yogi Bear after Art Carney's character on *The Honeymooners*, and patterned Snaggle Puss's voice after stage legend Bert Lahr, he says that Butler went far beyond a mere impersonation, and these voices became something unique.

Messick enters into the process of creating a voice the same way he would work on performing a role on the stage, or before the cameras. For him, it's all acting. He wants to do more than come up with a funny or appropriate voice. He wants to create a character for the drawing before him.

The opportunity to do an on-going role in a series means the chance to refine the characterization.

"That's what happens when you get into a series where you have the opportunity show after show to let the character evolve," explains Messick, who added that he wasn't pleased with his early performances as Boo Boo because "it sounded like he had a cold in the nose." Over the course of the series, he refined Boo Boo's voice to reflect his vision of the cartoon bear's personality, "a naive, simple, but lovable little guy."

In the beginning of the Hanna-Barbera studio, Messick notes that Joe Barbera directed everything, and he was a "tough taskmaster."

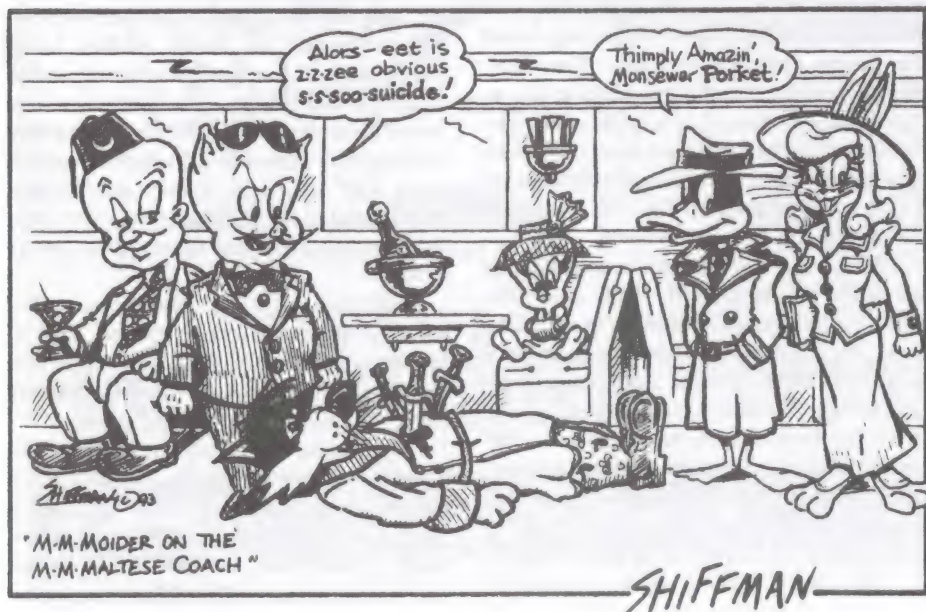
"The actors, I believe, always came away feeling, 'I didn't do it right. I tried, but...' You got the feeling that Joe thought, 'Well, that's as close as they're going to get to it, so...' He was always acting it out himself, and unless he heard it from the actor exactly as he heard it in his mind then it's not up to standard."

Regardless of what happened in the recording studio, Barbera must have appreciated Messick's talents (in his recent autobiography, Barbera refers to Messick as a "great" voice actor), as Messick still is associated with the studio nearly forty years later.

Who's the character closest to Messick's heart? Without missing a beat he responds "Scooby Doo." He says with pride that Scooby Doo was in production for 22 years, a record for television animation.

"I got into the character. I enjoyed it. People come up to me and tell me they grew up with Scooby," Messick says warmly.

That's the reward of creating memorable vocal characterizations.

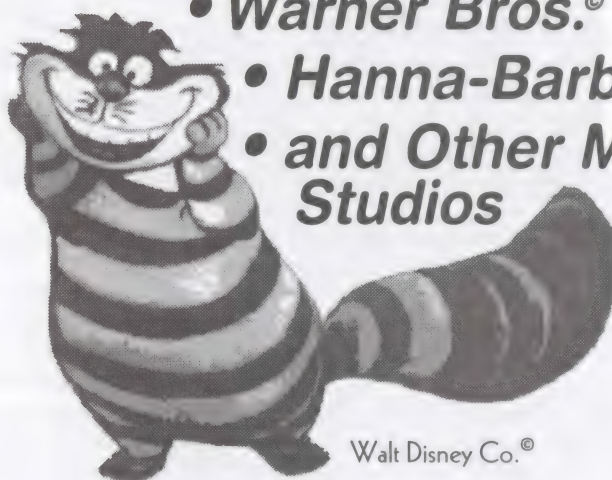




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BUMP IN THE NIGHT

First season Episode Guide

by Karl Cohen

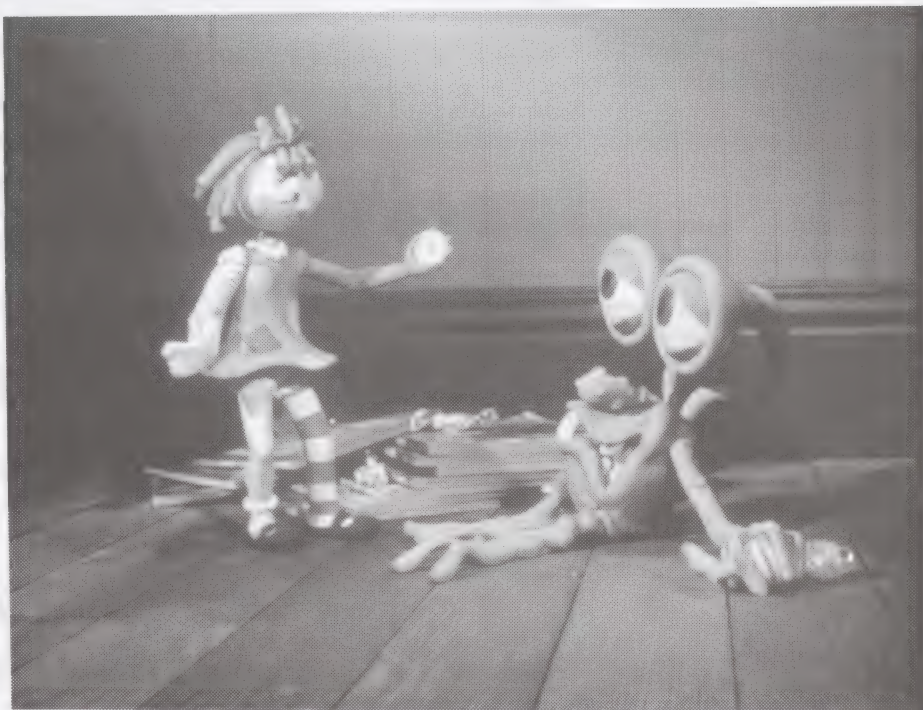
1a—"Doll Chase:" In which our main man Bumpy is chased, pummeled and forced to wear a tuxedo by the Cute Dolls in order that his friend Molly Coddle can go to a tea party she has her heart set on. In the end, although Bumpy almost dies of boredom (literally), things come out all right, as he and Molly make a shambles of the party and prove that No Good Deed Goes Unpunished. (written by: Ken Pontac & David Bleiman)

1b—"Story Problems:" Oops! Bumpy has mistakenly eaten the Boy's homework and must brave a whole slew of dangerous story problems that involve out-of-control locomotives, the Closet Monster, and turning himself inside-out, in order to set things right. Will the Bumpster survive the rigors of modern mathematics? (written by: Ken Pontac & David Bleiman)

2a—"In The Bowl Of The Squishy Prince:" Squishington thinks that getting kissed by a princess will turn him into a prince. With the help of his bosomest buddy Bumpy, he sets out to try and kiss a Cute Doll, with dire results. In the end, after being smooched by Princess Bumpalina (Mr. Bumpy in disguise), Squishington learns that he had the "heart" of a prince all along. (story by: Mark Zaslove & Elizabeth Stonecipher; teleplay by: Elizabeth Stonecipher)

2b—"To Sleep, Perchance To Burp." Heavens!! The Boy can't sleep, and if he can't sleep, his Mom says he's gonna turn into a zucchini!! Not that!! Well, Bumpy ain't gonna let that happen to his hero, his idol, the giver of all things dirty, gooey & wonderful. Nope, no-way, not in a million years. Unfortunately, no matter what Bumpy tries, it only keeps the Boy more awake—obviously, since the Boy's hearing Bumpy. What to do? What to do? It is up to the Bumpmeister to make the ultimate sacrifice: go up against the Closet Monster, in the hopes of letting his Boy get some shut eye. (story by: Mark Zaslove & Jeremy Cushner; teleplay by: Jeremy Cushner)

3a—"Hocus Dopus:" Squishington has a cold, and Mr. Bumpy vows to cheer his pal up by doing a magic trick: pulling a rabbit out of a hat! Unfortunately, nothing goes right. First, the hat won't open. Then, instead of a rabbit, Bumpy



yanks a really honked-off Rabid Squirrel out of the hat. And finally, our hero must confront a Giant Hairy Land Squid!! Can even Houdini escape this? Maybe, but what about Bumpy? (written by: Jeremy Cushner & Mark Zaslove)

3b—"Farewell To Arms:" In which Molly Coddle makes a "new woman" out of herself, peice by piece. First a gorilla arm, then a hairdryer arm, then the leg armor of Action Man. Suddenly, Molly is no longer the sweet wonderful comfort doll she always was, but a horrible power-crazed monster doll!! Will good triumph over evil? Will kindness win out in the end? I don't know, after all, this is Bump In The Night. (story by: Ken Pontac & David Bleiman; teleplay by: M.K. Brown)

4a—"Baby Jail:" Mr. Bumpy is turned into a baby and sentenced to time in the Big Crib. In a film noire parody of every prison movie ever made, Bumpy must survive in the brutal babies' world of high chairs, patty-cake and dirty diapers. Along the way, he must take on the head honcho: Big Mike, the Pacifier King. But even if he survives that, will he live through The Burping??? (story by: Ken Pontac & David Bleiman & Mark Zaslove; teleplay by: Ken

Pontac & David Bleiman)

4b—"Better Homes & Garbage:" Poor Squishington, he's become an outcast, a refugee, another statistic in the ever-escalating problem of homelessness. Yup, the plumber's come and uprooted the blue guy's toidy, and he has no place to stay. Hey, but what are friends' for? Bumpy lets his bosomest buddy stay with him. Great, right? Wrong!! Squish is trying so hard to be nice and helpful to Bumpy, that he's driving our hero out of his gourd. It's the *Odd Couple* with a couple of the oddest monsters around. Will Bump & Squish's friendship go the way of the buffalo? Stay tuned. (story by: Elizabeth Stonecipher & Mark Zaslove; teleplay by: Elizabeth Stonecipher)

5a—"Bumpy's Baby Snail Tale"—Bumpy hates babies, no 'if's,' 'and's' or baby 'butts.' Babies and Bump just don't mix. So what happens when our warty green hero becomes the caretaker of a little, lost, ootsy-wootsy-cutesy baby snail? Maternal bonding, that's what. Bumpy becomes a mom-surrogate extraordinaire! He and the little tyke rollick and play and basically get nauseatingly cute. But when the Momma Snail returns, Bumpy's heart is going to be

broken.....(story by: Elizabeth Stonecipher & Mark Zaslove; teleplay by: Elizabeth Stonecipher)

5b—"I Dream Of Silverfish." When Bumpy finds an old smoking pop bottle, he's absolutely positive there's a genie inside. There isn't, just a wise-cracking, confidence silverfish named Phil, who's willing to take advantage of Bumpy's gullibility to get a nice meal, some new clothes and all the comforts of home. It works, up until the end, when Bumpy finds out that if you work for those things you wish for, you can get them...even if you don't have a genie. (written by: Steve Sustarsic, Robin Quinn & Mark Zaslove)

6b—"A Sneeze In time." Bumpy accidentally insults his best bud Squishington. Oh, woe! Bumpy'd do anything to right his wrong, so he hatches a plan to go back in time and undo his mistake. But on the way, he must face past versions of himself, and a complete inability to not insult Squish over and over again. In the end, he learns that a simple apology is best..but only after tampering with the very workings of Time: the Fourth Dimension!!! (story by: Ken Pontac & Mark Zaslove; teleplay by: Jymn Magon)

7a—"Comforting The Uncomfortable." Molly Coddle is a comfort doll extraordinaire. Yup, there isn't anything she can't comfort, or so she feels. "After all," she says, "it's my job." Unfortunately, Molly takes on more than she can chew (or comfort), when she tries to succor the impossible: the Closet Monster!! Will Molly survive? Only if Squish & Bump give her a hand. (story by Mark Zaslove, Ken Pontac & David Bleiman; teleplay by: Jeremy Cushner)

7b—"Gum Crazy." Bumpy's gone gum greedy. He's chewed, spewed and swallowed every stick and wad in the house. And he wants more. When he discovers that gum stays in the stomach for over 7 years before being digested, he reaches down into himself to get it. But wait, this warps the very fabric of space, and an awesome black hole is created, one that will swallow the Earth if Bumpy doesn't let go of the gum. Can Squishington, braving the "Fantastic Yucky Voyage" inside Bumpy, convince his friend to let go of the gum? Hardly. Looks like the Earth is doomed. (story by Jim Mattson & Mark Zaslove; teleplay by: Jim Mattson)

8a—"Made In Japan." Bumpy's ordered a really cool, neat, humungous toy robot from the back of a breakfast cereal box. Boy, is it gonna be great! Squishington is kinda worried, though. The robot looks very big, massive and threatening. To Squish's relief (and Bumpy's bummer), the robot, when it arrives, turns out to

be a little cute mechanical droid, not a big, threatening robot. Unfortunately, late that night, something big and threatening is howling to the skies. Is it the giant robot? And how did it get in the house!! No one will believe Squish, because all they see is the little cute droid. A dark and terrible secret is revealed at the end, but you'll have to watch it to find out what. (story by Ken Pontac, David Bleiman & Mark Zaslove; teleplay by: Elizabeth Stonecipher)

8b—"Sock It To Me." Bumpy has a problem: he can't stop eating socks. He's a sockaholic!! He enlists the aid of his pal Squishington to break him of this terrible habit. But to no avail. When Squish finally puts his own life on the line in order to save Bumpy, an end is in sight. But whose end? (story by: Mark Zaslove & Ken Pontac; teleplay by: Steve Sustarsic & Robin Quinn)

9a—"Adventure In Microbia." Squishington has the cleaning jones. He's gonna clean every single germ out of his bathroom, if it's the last thing he does. And it just might be. When he and Bumpy shrink themselves down to the microscopic level to disinfect the germs mano-o-germo, things get pretty rough. A cute girl germ gets the hots for Squish, and he must fight off her amorous advances as well as the father

of all germs, the giant killer ameba, or he and Bumpy will be nothing but virus droppings. (story by Elizabeth Stonecipher, Mark Zaslove & Jeremy Cushner; teleplay by: Jeremy Cushner)

9b—"Not Of This Boy's Room." Aliens bent on invading the Earth accidentally abduct Bumpy; woe is they. Bumpy ends up fouling up their invasion plans, destroying their killer robot and making the aliens feel mighty alien, before finally crash-landing the flying saucer smack dab in the middle of the Boy's room. Only Elvis Presley could make things worse. Hey, who's that on the horizon with a guitar strapped across his back? Why, it's... (story by: Jeremy Cushner & Mark Zaslove; teleplay by: Jeremy Cushner)

10a—" Loss Of Face." Squish hates his face. He thinks it's worthless and boring. "Who would want a face like this?" Well, when our blue guy accidentally wipes his face off onto his washrag, we find out who would want his face. Silverfish! Yup, Squishy's face is valuable. Possibly the most valuable thing the Silverfish could have: they all but worship it! Now Squish must somehow convince a whole subbasement full of hostile silverfish to give him back his face. Just goes to show that one man's face is another man's icon. (story by: Mark Zaslove & Jim Mattson; teleplay by: Jim Mattson)



Women in Animation: *Linda Simensky, Vanessa Coffey, and Mary Harrington*

*A new on-going series in ANIMATO!
examining the role of women in the
long-time male-dominated world of
animation.*

by G. Michael Dobbs

Last year, the new organization Women in Animation was formed in Los Angeles to give women animation professionals a forum to discuss their craft and their gender's history in animation.

Since J.R. Bray developed the organizational model that is the backbone of the modern animation studio, women have had a role in the creation of cartoons. Unfortunately, nearly all the positions women had were in the assembly-line jobs of inking and painting. Women, for the most part, were silently banned from creative positions.

There were very few exceptions. Laverne Harding's long tenure at Walter Lantz's studio certainly proved that women had the ability to animate as did Lillian Friedman's time at the Fleischer Studios.

Finally, after more than nearly a century of animation, women are in positions of creative power in the industry, and if one needs evidence of the success of women in animation one can look no further than the cable box on top of your television set.

The success of Nickelodeon's line-up of cartoons can certainly be credited to the women broadcast executives who chose those series, and worked with the creative teams to make them a reality. Without their support, there would not have been Ren, Stimp, Doug, a bunch of Rugrats, Rocko, and some Real Monsters cavorting on our television screens.

ANIMATO! interviewed three of the women in positions of creative power at Nickelodeon; Vanessa Coffey and Mary Harrington, in Los Angeles, and Linda Simensky in New York.

Linda Simensky

For a moment, I thought I had stumbled across a doppelganger of my ANIMATO! office. The walls are absolutely covered with comic strips, posters, and spot illustrations taken from magazines. The shelves are loaded with

animation toys and figures. There are books, comic books and video tapes strewn about the flat surfaces of the office. Yes, this is an executive office. It looks out over Broadway onto Times Square. There is a receptionist area outside the door. But it looks like a *fan* lives here.

Linda Simensky has done what many readers of ANIMATO! undoubtedly dream of doing. She's gone from being an animation fan to professional in her position as Director for Development of Nickelodeon Animation. Simply put, Simensky is the person responsible for finding the Nicktoons of the future.

"I basically look for the properties. I look at all sort of things. I look at comic books and comic strips. I look at short films, and the work of illustrators. I meet with animators doing work. I look at spot illustrations. I look for strong characters and really strong designs. I spearhead the process at Nick," explains Simensky.

Her responsibility ranges from the sketch presenting a character to the end of the first season the series is on the air.

"It's a long process; about two years until the end of the first season," said Simensky, who readily admits she becomes greatly attached to the people with whom she works and the series itself.

What is she looking for in a potential new series?

"There are two ways I divide it up. The first is the design and the character. The first thing that will reel me in is a great design, and that's a design; that doesn't look like everything else that's out there. Basically it doesn't look like anything we've seen but still looks like an



Linda Simensky

animated property," Simensky explains. "And then once I'm in with the design if the characters are interesting enough or funny enough, if there's an interesting hook to the show we're there. I can look at a sketch on a piece of paper and have a conversation with something, and have a sense if it should be developed."

Another of Simensky's tests is the "smart/funny/fun" gauntlet.

"It has to be one step beyond 'rad surfer dude.' It has to be smart. It has to be really funny. And fun, the super-intangible. Does it feel like a fun property? Would I wear a tee shirt with that character embroidered on the pocket? Would I buy one for my younger cousin or would I cringe when I saw it?"

One of the criteria that certainly exists for other producers of television animation is whether or not a property is pre-sold; is it an adaptation of a popular comic strip, comic book, movie or live action television show, and does it have considerable licensing potential? One

can look at recent series such as *Sonic the Hedgehog*, *Problem Child* and *Beethoven*, for example, as examples of the pre-sold cartoon.

Simensky admits she doesn't know if she would be comfortable doing her job if she had to develop series out of toys or pre-sold properties. While Nickelodeon has an active licensing effort, the decision to air a series is not one dictated by the sale potential of PCV figures.

Simensky has had a long love affair with animation. She enjoyed it as a child, and found her appreciation for the medium grow when she was in college and discovered independent and foreign animation. Her favorite animated obsession? Vintage *Speed Racer* shows!

Simensky loves innovative cartoons, and wants the Nicktoons she develops to further animation's reputation. "People aren't used to see innovation coming out of a television show. Innovation [in animation] traditionally comes from commercials and short films where people can take risks," says Simensky, who believes that innovation comes from "pushing the envelope."

Pushing the envelope is something the network certainly has done with *The Ren and Stimpy Show*. While Simensky admits the show may go beyond the good taste barrier, she maintains that from the stretching of limits comes something new, fresh and funny.

Simensky is president of the New York chapter of ASIFA, and is very active in forming a New York chapter of Women in Animation. She beams when she recounts the initial meetings of the Women in Animation group in which women from the various animation studios in the New York area had the chance simply to connect with one another.

As an animation professional, Simensky is well aware of the sexism that exists in the industry, but says that at Nickelodeon conditions are different.

"Everyone has an equal chance of getting a job. There's no old boy network here. The best person is going to get the job. In the animation department there's no effort to skewer things one way or another," says Simensky.

"The key thing about the people I work with," she says, "is that we're animation fans."

Vanessa Coffey

The woman who is the executive producer of *The Ren and Stimpy Show* admits with a laugh that she "actually got involved in animation by accident."

Coffey began her career in animation at Marvel Productions in 1981 where she worked on the development of the long-running Saturday morning series, *The Muppet Babies*.

"I worked at Marvel Productions for six years, and then left to go Murikami-Wolf-Swenson where I worked on the development of the first five half-hour episodes of *The*

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, then I left for New York, and went to Nickelodeon, and suggested they do an animated special, and have me produce it. I somehow sold them on that idea. It was the first animated special they would produce and own themselves," she recalls.

The success of the *Nick's Thanksgiving Fest* gave Coffey the credibility for thinking about developing series for the cable network. Nickelodeon asked her to find some ideas for series and Coffey went back to the west coast. She brought back three potential shows, *Rugrats*, *Ren and Stimpy* and *Weasel Patrol*, and picked up a fourth in New York when Jim Jenkins told her about *Doug*. The network was impressed with the cartoons, allowed Coffey to produce pilot episodes which were then tested. All but *Weasel Patrol* were given the go-head to be made into a series.

"And the rest is history," says Coffey with a laugh.

Being one of the few women executives in the animation business has indeed often made Coffey feel like a stranger in a strange land.

"But I had a great mentor, and that was Margaret Loesch at Marvel Productions. When I was there she was president of Marvel, and she was a shining example to me. She led me to believe that women in this business could succeed, could be smart and powerful. If it hadn't been for her I probably would have felt it was a dead end in this business."

"Then I went to Nickelodeon and Gerry Laybourne, and felt very optimistic about the possibilities. I felt very lucky to have been around Margaret and Gerry. In a lot of studios and a lot of companies they're all run by men. If it hadn't been for Margaret, I probably would have pursued another avenue in my career."

Some people in animation have made a point in the past several years of declaring that women can not appreciate the kind of slapstick, prevalent in animation. Has Coffey experienced that kind of prejudice?

"Yes, but I don't think that's an animation problem. I think that is a problem in general. I certainly don't think that it's men across the board who think that. I think that some men in this business feel that way, but I don't think all of them feel that way."

The Nicktoons were important to Coffey's career for more than one reason.

"After spending ten years in the animation business and after [being in] animation in television especially during the Eighties, which was horrifying, I didn't want to be in the animation business any longer if I couldn't make shows I couldn't watch myself, and I couldn't be proud of. The idea was kids are so sophisticated, and kids like unique styles in art and animation,

and I felt it was important to give them a diverse style for each show as well as a diverse idea for each show.

"I wanted to be proud of my shows and I wanted to feel that I wasn't being condescending, and they were sophisticated. It was a very thought-out plan."

Doug was designed to present a role model with a positive point-of view, Coffey notes, while a show like *Ren and Stimpy* is "dessert."

What kind of impact has the success of Nicktoons made on the animation industry? Well, Coffey is not alone in her belief that the networks have recently shown more interest in developing original series rather than rely on adapting a comic book, a live action television show or a movie.

"Nicktoons represents the notion that you can do animation that's not pre-sold...we didn't have to do characters based on a movie," declares Coffey.

Coffey also thinks that more animation creators are seeing the possibility for success for original series, and have been pitching more ideas to the networks for different kinds of animated programming.

Besides her duties on *Ren and Stimpy*, Coffey is developing a feature film and several new series. Although she is strongly attracted to making the leap into live-action productions, she readily admits she "can't resist a good animation project."



Vanessa Coffey

Mary Harrington

Mary Harrington's introduction to animation was made when she was working for Steve Hahn, the co-producer of the 1988 *The Chipmunk Adventure* feature. Although hired to develop live-action projects, Harrington found herself fascinated by animation.

"It was really strange," she recalls. "I was doing live action development at Bagdasarian [Productions], and became more and more interested in animation, and decided that's where I wanted to go with my career." Harrington is now vice president and executive producer of Nicktoons.

After her exposure to Alvin, Theodore and Simon, Harrington went to Nickelodeon in the fall of 1990. She had worked with Vanessa Coffey on the *Nick's Thanksgiving Fest*, and remembered the anxiety that production caused. The overseas animation studio was in the Philippines, and Nickelodeon had a difficult time getting the completed footage out of Manila after the military coup!

With the success of that special, Harrington began work on developing the first Nicktoons. The network started production on *Ren and Stimpy* in the fall of 1990, and *Doug* in December of 1990. Harrington moved back to Los Angeles two years ago to work with Games Animation, and work with *Rocko's Modern Life*.

While Harrington is very interested in finding a female creator to develop a new show, she's proud that the current Nicktoons "have proven that boys and girls can enjoy the same show."

The charge that animation humor is something women don't understand is something Harrington has faced, and discussed at length with Linda Simensky. The two have come up with a light-hearted theory that if some women don't care for slapstick, it's because they lack the "Three Stooges gene."

Harrington believes the Nickelodeon approach to developing a series incorporates the best elements of classic animation and live-action production. For many years in television animation, series were sold to the networks on the basis of a sales meeting in which a studio representative would present a series synopsis and a few key drawings to represent the production. Considering the quality of the overwhelming majority of Saturday morning series in the '60s, '70s and '80s, one can draw some damning conclusions on this way of developing a series. Nickelodeon follows the live-action television model. It orders a pilot of a cartoon, and then tests it for audience reaction.

Harrington also believes another difference is producing cartoons that are creator-driven. At Nickelodeon, the producer is part of a team along with the cartoon's creator, and the series' writers and directors. "The creative vision is so much more dynamic when it's approached in



Mary Harrington

this way," says Harrington.

The rest of the industry has indeed been influenced by the success of the Nicktoons and how they are made.

"Definitely, I feel we've been the leader of the pack. Following the launch of Nicktoons, there's been a increase energy in the animation business. The creator-driven process seems to be spreading to other studios. The animation artists seem to be more empowered within the industry since the launch of Nicktoons," asserts Harrington.

Harrington is proud of the number of women who are currently creating animation at Nickelodeon, and the mentor effect the network is having. Two of the directors currently working at MTV's *Beavis and Butthead* are women who worked on *Doug*. She promises that Nickelodeon will be active in the new organization Women in Animation.

Harrington has two more goals for the network; to work with a female creator, and to develop a show with a strong female character. Considering the success of the past few years, undoubtedly these goals will be met.

As always ANIMATO! gratefully acknowledges the kind assistance of publicity person supreme, Paula Kaplan.

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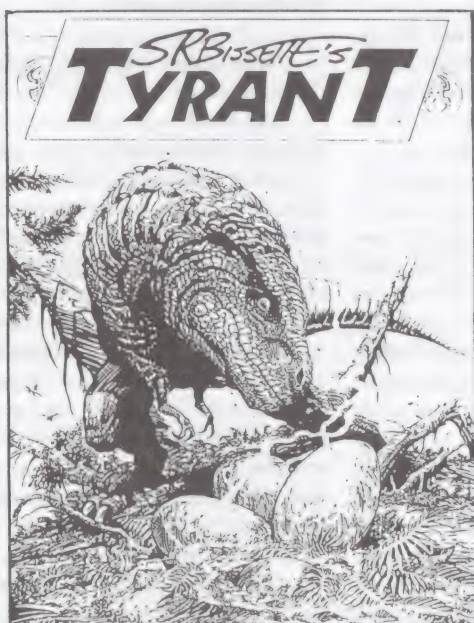
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Beck to the Future

Watch out! Jerry Beck candidly discusses the state of feature animation and takes no prisoners

by Bob Miller

Never before in the history of animation has so many animated features been in production. Take a look at what's coming:

Disney: *The Goofy Movie*, *Pocahontas*, *Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Toy Story*, *James and the Giant Peach*, *Hercules*, *Fantasia Continued*, *The Legend of Fa Mulan*, "The Dinosaur Project."

Turner: *Cats Don't Dance*, *Pandora's Box*

Hanna/Barbera: *Captain Planet: The Movie*, *Space Ghost*, *October Moon*

Arrow: *Gumby: The Movie*

Amblin: *Balto*, *Cats*, *Noah's Blimp*

Bluth/Fox: unannounced

Bluth/MGM: *The Pebble and the Penguin*

Columbia: *The Nightingale*

DreamWorks: *The Ten Commandments*

Lana Film/Hemdale: *The Mighty Kong*

Miramax: *The Thief and the Cobbler*

MGM: *All Dogs Go to Heaven II*

Nelvana: *The Thief of Always*, *Trumpet of the Swan*, *The Mask of Dr. EFX*, *The Sign of the Seahorse*

Nickelodeon Movies: unannounced

Rich Entertainment: *Feathertop*

Santa Monica Pictures: *The Adventures of Peter Rabbit*

Will Vinton: *The Frog Prince*

Warners: unannounced

Last fall came the first clash of the new wave of feature animation, and alas, there were casualties. *A Troll in Central Park* [see the review in this issue's Toon Reviews] appeared for only one day in theaters before it went to home video in January. *The Swan Princess* and *The Pagemaster* floundered at the box office, while *The Lion King* marched on to become the biggest-grossing film of 1994, and the fourth highest-grossing film ever.

For the losers, what went wrong? Why does Disney continue to smash box office records with its animated features? Is it possible for rival studios to succeed and break what is called in animation circles, "The Disney Curse?"

During New Year's Day, I discussed the matter with Jerry Beck, one of the world's foremost animation authorities. His writing has appeared in *ANIMATO!*, *Animation Magazine*,

Get Animated!, *Cartoon Quarterly*, *Comic Buyer's Guide*, and *Wild Cartoon Kingdom*. With Will Friedwald, he wrote the definitive Warner Brothers filmography, *Looney Tunes and Merry Melodies*. He wrote *I Tawt I Taw a Puddy Tat*, and edited *The 50 Greatest Cartoons*.

"Let's talk about *The Pagemaster* for a minute. Where, when, who, what is David Kirschner's great opus? After seeing the finished film, I fail to see where anyone thought there was any entertainment value in this movie."

Beck's film distribution experience comes from serving at United Artists, Orion Classic, Cannon releasing and Expanded Entertainment. In 1989, he co-founded Streamline Pictures with *Robotech's* Carl Macek. Last year, he served as executive producer for Harvey Entertainment on *The Baby Huey Show*. Today, Beck is the vice president of Nickelodeon Movies, which aims to add a new spin in making feature animation.

Jerry, what's your perspective on the state of animation today?

As a historian, I try to learn from history. We are in a period similar to the mid-Thirties when Disney was the leader among people producing short subjects. Every studio in Hollywood had a short subject series.

Disney had Mickey Mouse and *Silly Symphonies*. Warners had Bosko and *Merrie Melodies*. Water Lantz had Oswald and *Cartune Classics*. Fleischer really didn't copy what Disney was doing; he had *Color Classics*, and Popeye and Betty Boop in black and white. There were Color Rhapsodies and Happy Harmonies. Everybody was imitating Disney in the short subjects, but Disney was three years ahead of everybody else.

Then, Disney came out with *Snow White*, he jumped five years ahead of everybody else. And still people thought there was only one way to make cartoons. It was only Warner Brothers saying, "Hey we don't do that. We can do something else. We can do funny cartoons that

do something different." Fleischer did *Superman*; it was something different. The radicals who left Disney in the early Forties to become UPA, which showed a different direction.

There's always a different avenue. It just

takes somebody courageous to do it. That's something I hope I can do.

Now Disney has a factory. Today, they have a machine that makes great films; they can't stop. They're set up just like Warner Cartoons was in the Forties. They were a regular, everyday factory that made films in a particular way. And Disney's now at that point. I can't do it with one movie. Rich [Entertainment] isn't going to do it with one movie. No one is going to do it with one movie. You have to be set up. Bluth actually has a set-up to do it. Unfortunately, his directing is another matter.

Why didn't *The Swan Princess* or *The Pagemaster* do well at the box office?

Let's talk about *The Pagemaster* for a minute. Where, when, who, what is David Kirschner's great opus? After seeing the finished film, I fail to see where anyone thought there was any entertainment value in this movie.

This is what I call a nightmare scenario. It's a kid who is a nerd who gets trapped in a library where all of these book characters are chasing him. And he's just trying to get out. In the end that makes him more of a daredevil rather than a kid who really wants to read more. We don't really feel like he learned anything from this ridiculous experience that he went through of being trapped in a library, and being turned into a cartoon and chased by characters from adventure books.

There was wonderful art direction. But nobody goes to see a movie for art direction. I'm

not trying to put the film down as a complete failure. There were some nice bits in it.

I didn't like the character design. I didn't like those book characters. They were hideous. The idea of two books kissing at one point, you, know, was disgusting.

You just didn't care about the lead character. Going into this movie, if you didn't already know the movie version of *Treasure Island*, and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *Moby Dick*, then you were lost. If you were a kid, and you never read those stories, you wouldn't know what the heck was going on. You would be lost.

It certainly wouldn't encourage you to read. He didn't have a grand adventure; it was a nightmare. He was running from these characters in the world of adventure, the world of fantasy and horror. It was one nightmare after another. He just wanted to wake up. What kind of movie was that? It didn't inspire anybody to do anything. It just inspired the production of a feature animated film, the merchandising, and CD-ROM's, and that's all it did.

In its favor: good art design, good art direction, fairly decent animation, and I'll give it points for not being a musical, and for not following the fairy tale formula that's adopted by everybody now. It's not like *Thumbelina* and *The Swan Princess*. This is a new line. This is now what a feature animated film is considered at this point.

It's really funny that we're complaining about something like this because ten years ago we would be delighted. Ten years ago a feature animated film was *The Care Bears Movie*. *The Go-Bots*. *Strawberry Shortcake*. *My Little Pony - The Movie*. That was a standard animated feature. Those films were based on a toy line or TV series.

So we're at a point now where the standard for an animated feature is a musical fairy tale told in a lush style; which is great. But it's still derivative; it's still a copy of what the leader [Disney] is doing.

Swan Princess was a fairy tale like Beauty and the Beast, and The Little Mermaid. Why wasn't it successful?

First of all, you're not going to succeed by imitation. Doing more fairy tales is not what animation needs. I'm so glad we're not doing more Care Bears movies, but doing more of anything is not what the world needs. We need new and different films.

Let's talk about marketing and distribution for a moment.

When Disney released *The Little Mermaid*, they had a teaser poster that was a silhouette of the little mermaid on a rock, and it had a tag line, just a beautiful sparse poster that didn't look like a kid movie poster. It looked like it was made for adults. It was a really beautiful poster. In fact, it was so beautiful that they imitated that

"The Swan Princess is not a bad film. I'll be looking at it on cassette on TV in the future, and I'll be saying "Oh, it's good. it's a good film. It's up there with Ferngully as a non-Disney film that's watchable. And entertaining in its way."

exact style for the next few films, reissues like *Pinocchio* and *Beauty and The Beast*, and *Aladdin*.

They had two posters: a regular Disney movie-type poster for kids, and they had their adult teaser poster. And that was fine. Most of the time you saw what I call the "kiddie" poster. The one for *Beauty and The Beast* has Belle surrounded by the enchanted objects, and there's a cloud in the background in the shape of the Beast. It was very colorful.

Why was Disney able to get away with their kiddie posters and Swan wasn't? Basically it was the same pose.

Already you're making a mistake by doing the same thing. Why were they able to get away with it? Well, they had both; they appealed to both, and the thing is the film appeals to both. The bottom line is that adults took their kids to see *The Little Mermaid*, and they told their other adult friends to go see it. "It's really good. You can go without your kids, it's great." And they came away with that.

Now, with *The Lion King*, they abandoned doing the kiddie poster. They now realize they've got an adult audience, and the kids are going to come. That's perfect thinking. I agree with that completely. Because kids will naturally enjoy cartoons. Kids want to enjoy what their parents like. So aim it at adults. You don't have to make an adult film, just aim it at adults. Aim your advertising at the core audience.

So you're saying with *The Swan Princess*, people aimed their ads at...

Aimed it down like Don Bluth does. They aimed it at six year-olds. They aimed it at the parents and babysitters. They didn't aim at the general population that goes to the movies.

The Lion King was fantastic in their ad campaign. They never used a kiddie campaign. "Pride Rock" was a fantastic poster. That's similar to their previous adult posters, and they had two versions: one where it's at a distance, and one that was a close-up of a lion on the rock. That was in the newspaper ads a lot. And it was dynamic.

It wasn't a group of Disney characters all looking at us friendly and smiling. It was a dynamic image of this lion that you took seriously. You know, it was powerful.

They played this movie as if it was a major release, a major event, and people bought

it. It's that aspect of distribution that has to be done. That's equally important as the film itself. The film itself has to deliver. And when the people come, it has to be great. It has to be what they're saying it is.

You can say that *The Swan Princess* had similar Disney-esque advertising. But the movie didn't deliver a Disney-esque film when people saw it. As close as it was to Disney, and as far from Don Bluth as it was, it still didn't deliver.

That makes it a bad film?

The Swan Princess is not a bad film. I'll be looking at it on cassette on TV in the future, and I'll be saying "Oh, it's good. it's a good film. It's up there with *Ferngully* as a non-Disney film that's watchable. And entertaining in its way.

How do you rate its ad campaign?

An early poster for *The Swan Princess* had no tag line. It just said *The Swan Princess*. And it showed the two lead characters, and they actually don't look that bad in the film. But in the poster they actually look terrible. These were very crude-looking characters, and a copy of a Disney-type poster. And it just looked ugly. It was saying, "This is a kiddie movie. Don't even think of seeing this movie as valid entertainment." But that's the thinking that goes on at these film distributors.

With the ad campaign for *The Swan Princess*, if what they're trying to accomplish is to sell videocassettes, then they're doing a fine job. They will sell many, many videocassettes. If they want to create a theatrical motion picture that people are going to see, and be a big box office hit, like Disney does, they did not do a fine job.

I don't blame the animation studio for this. I blame New Line Cinema. I blame the distributors for treating all animation as kiddie stuff. At least the Disney films are now, by the public, considered not just kiddie stuff, so they take it seriously.

How about the use of celebrity voices for the sake of drawing adults?

To me what's the point of having a Steven Wright or John Cleese if you're not going to let them be a Steven Wright or John Cleese? You can get anybody to do these voices. There was no point for those people being characters. I forgot Jack Palance was the villain until the end

of the movie. I didn't even think about it. I guess, in a way, that's good. But why use him then?

In *Rock-a-Doodle*, why did they use Phil Harris? Because he was in Disney movies? Because people who grew up with other Disney movies will relate to his voice in a Disney-like film Bluth's trying to make?

Why did Disney use Phil Harris? It wasn't for me as a kid because I didn't know who Phil Harris was. It's the same reason why they use Robin Williams today. A small kid really doesn't know who Robin Williams is. He just knows it's a funny genie making funny faces. Adults know who Robin Williams is. Well, adults knew who Phil Harris was in the Sixties. Phil Harris was a popular singer and performer on the Jack Benny radio show 20 years earlier. He being a voice in this cartoon was a funny idea. And to see Phil Harris as a bear was a clever thing for them to do at that time for the adult audience. They also had George Sanders and a whole bunch of other people.

Dom De Luise, his time is past. I'll grant you John Cleese and Steven Wright are hipper than Dom De Luise. But you got to use these people the right way. Dom De Luise is a great voice. I would use him in a cartoon. He's fine. When they use Dom De Luise, they're using him as Dom De Luise. They're not wasting him like they did with Steven Wright and John Cleese. There's so many actors out there. I'd only use stars if it was valid to use a star. Disney doesn't use stars anymore. They use a couple of them. The last film was *Lion King*. They used Matthew Broderick. Who cares? Jeremy Irons. They use those people correctly. Jeremy Irons is a good actor who can give that kind of performance. That's why they used him. Nobody's going to see an animated movie because Jeremy Irons is in it, and nobody's going to see *The Swan Princess* because Jack Palance is in it. It's insane.

How do you compare the ad campaigns for *Lion King* and *Swan* with *Pagemaster*?

Pagemaster used what I call the traditional "all the characters looking at us" poster. They wanted to show people that Macaulay Culkin and cartoon characters are in it.

You got to look at how movies advertise in the papers today. The standard thing is a huge close-up of Denzel Washington's face or Gene Hackman or Patrick Stewart and William Shatner.

That's what Disney was doing with *The Lion King*. They give you a close-up of their lead in an emotional pose. And that's what today's advertising is. You never saw non-animated films that has every single character you know bunched into the ad looking towards us. They did that back in the Fifties. They don't do that anymore.

But they do it with animated films. They did it with *Thumbelina*. Most animated films have the same advertising.

When I was at Streamline, my big goal was to do a contemporary poster. I wanted our posters lined in the lobby among four other posters from major studios, and I wanted them to blend in. I wanted our posters to look like it came from those other studios.

The *Akira* poster had a powerful image. I told Carl [Macek]. "This image is like the *Ghostbusters* logo. It was on everything representing *Ghostbusters*." To me, Tetsuo with the gun in Neo-Tokyo was the *Ghostbusters* image of *Akira*. If I were having to publicize *Akira* in the long run, I'd always use that image because it's very strong, very powerful, and it says *Akira*. It says it all.

But not only did you have a strong image for *Akira*, you also had a nice catch-phrase, "Neo-Tokyo is About to Explode."

Which I wrote. I wrote all the catch-phrase, except for one or two towards the end.

You always have to have a catch-phrase. The best bet is to have as few words as possible, and as clever as it can possibly be. That really takes talent. I admire the people who come up with them.

Our posters were direct. You get a powerful image, and put the logo across and a copy line on the top, and put the credits on the bottom just like standard movie posters do. Even Disney doesn't do that for some unknown reason. *The Pagemaster* did. I liked that because it looks like a real movie when you have all the credits on the poster because that's what everybody else has. If suddenly you have the trend to not do posters like that, then I would [change.] You got to go with the flow.

I was looking at a book of Disney ads from the first features through 1966. It was published as a tribute to Disney. They took clippings from all the press books of all the ads for all the movies. The movies they made in the Forties have Forties-looking ads. And the movies in the Sixties have Sixties-looking ads. When Disney died, they continued that Sixties-style of advertising to the Seventies and early Eighties. That's part of the problem with that period of time.

It's the archaic thinking by the people who merchandise: "Oh, all cartoons are done this way." I applaud the few times it hasn't happened. *An American Tail* is one that broke the mold.

One thing I liked about *An American Tail* way back when, was even though that was a kiddie picture really, the advertising for it was very adult. They were really aiming at an adult audience with that poster by Drew Strusan, who is one of the best poster artists; human feet walking up the plank and here's Feivel. It felt like a real movie, with the lettering, the tag line

and using quotes in the ad. The whole ad campaign made it look like a real movie. And people responded to that.

The poster has to tell you something. Every separate element of an ad campaign has to make you want to see it. It has to get you excited.

The best sales tool is the trailer, because you can manipulate what's in the trailer and make it as exciting as you want it. But that's one advantage that films like *Thumbelina* and probably *Swan Princess* had, because their images in short bursts looked like Disney films.

What kinds of films should studios be making?

There should be more completely different types of animated films. We should have *Akiras*. We should have all sorts of things just so people don't think that animation films are this one thing. We're still where we were a few years ago, as far as my line on 'singing dinosaurs and talking dogs.' That's what people perceive animation to be. People now perceive it to be the same thing with music and fairy tales.

Make it different. And I don't mean different the Don Bluth way; I mean to do it in an entertaining way.



Bob Miller is an animation professional who has written for a variety of publications, including ANIMATO!.

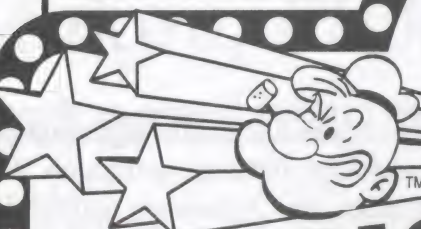
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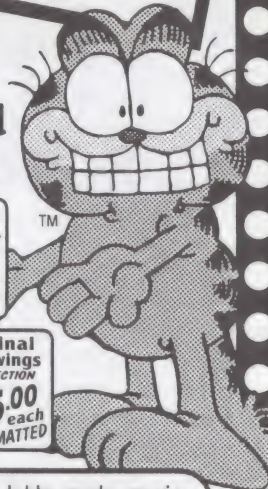
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Animation From Overseas, Part One



For most American animation fans, if you discuss foreign animation, they almost always assume you're referring to Japanese animation. While Japanese animation certainly dominates the American marketplace, animation, like live-action film, is a medium which is used by artists throughout the world.

This special section on contemporary British animation is the first of what will be an on-going series of articles focusing on animation from around the world. **ANIMATO!** thanks Andrew Osmond, the first of our foreign correspondents for his efforts to introduce our readers to what's happening to an animation scene other than our own or Japan's.

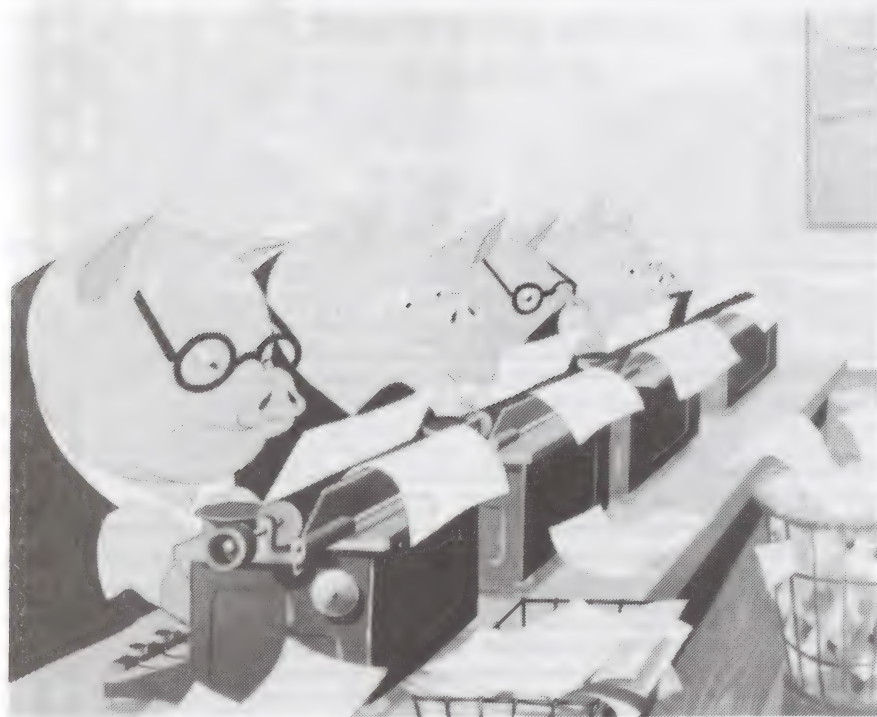
Today's British animators follow in a rich tradition. John Halas of Halas and Batchelor is acknowledged internationally for his contributions including producing the first British animated feature, *Animal Farm* (1954) and many wonderful short subjects. American expatriates Ray Harryhausen and Terry Gilliam produced nearly all their animation in Great Britain. British animated shorts have been nominated for Academy Awards.

The following two interviews show the kind of innovation and experimentation that has often characterized British animation. Gerald

Scarfe's character design and direction of the animated sections of *Pink Floyd The Wall* are the parts of the film which most viewers remember the most. When the film was released, critics were justifiably impressed with Scarfe's achievement.

Critics today have also been impressed with the bolex brothers' *The Secret Adventures of Tom Thumb*. Once again, British animators have found an innovative way to utilize established techniques.

Animation is an universal medium, and **ANIMATO!** will make every effort to expand our readers' horizons. **GMD**



A scene from *Animal Farm*, the first British feature.



Making Pink Floyd The Wall: Interview with Gerald Scarfe

by Darris McFarland

The critical ghetto in which animation has frequently found itself has dissuaded many "serious" artists from other mediums to experiment with moving pictures. Seldom has animation been used by an artist the stature of Gerald Scarfe. The illustrator, political cartoonist, and designer is one of three British artists who rose to prominence in the late Sixties and Seventies; the others being Ronald Searle and Ralph Steadman. In the United Kingdom, Scarfe is known for biting political cartoons, and for his innovative costume and set designs for numerous theatrical productions.

Scarfe's animation work in *Pink Floyd The Wall* (1982, 99 minutes, MGM/UA home video, \$14.95) clearly led the way for the use of animation in rock video. Seldom, though, has rock animation had the both the emotional and intellectual impact as Scarfe's vision in the film adaption of the popular album.

Throughout this telephone interview, Scarfe's exhibited a refreshing dry wit while speaking about the creative process that led to a movie that has achieved cult status throughout the world.

Let's begin with your early influences and how they shaped your themes and style.

I was an asthmatic child which meant I spent a lot of time in bed and like many bedridden children I didn't have a lot of friends because nobody wants to visit a sick child. I spent my time reading and drawing and that's how I started my drawing. I think my earliest influences other than the childish books I was reading would have been Walt Disney. Disney had an enormous effect on me in those early years. Obviously there was no television so when a Disney film came out like *Pinocchio* or *Dumbo* there was a huge hype and I used to wait for them.

As I grew up, I didn't get a full education because of my illness. I'd come back to school, and the other children would be doing geometry while I was sick, so I never quite understood what was going on. I did know that I could draw.

When I left school, I went to work in my uncle's commercial art studio. There I felt that I lacked any sort of formal art training so I

started to go to art school, and I bought medical books to study anatomy. My drawings that appeared during that period were very anatomical. They had all the muscles and the hairs and the pimples and the bones. They gave me the label of being grotesque in those days.

While in my uncle's studio, I started drawing cartoons for the paper. They were jokes about desert islands and mother-in-laws and the usual stuff, but I felt I should be saying something about the world around me. Luckily, around this time (the Sixties) a satirical magazine called *Private Eye* came about in England. Here I was able to let rip. I could draw anything. Before that there had only been *Punch*. Working for *Private Eye* during the so called "Satire Boom" here in England, I think that I sort of blossomed and I left the commercial art world behind.

Did you dislike commercial art?

The commercial art world has always struck me as being the world of a lie. Everything in advertising is not telling the truth, it's telling what people would like to think.

It's art for sale.

Yes, everything is presented in the most favorable light. If I was drawing blankets then they would be the most wonderful, fluffy, soft blankets, and in reality the merchandise itself was crap. So I felt I was being false to my work. I think that is why I began to make social commentary with my work and that led to caricature. I began to caricature the people in power who were misusing that power, and that's really how I began.

You were obviously becoming more popular and influential during this period. How did you get into animation?



Gerald Scarfe

I think all artists like to see their art come to life, so I started making sculptures of my cartoons and then putting electric motors in them to make them move, which gave them a three dimensional animation. I'd always been fascinated with animation, but I didn't quite know how to do it. At some point, the BBC sent me to Los Angeles to try out a new system which, at that time was called the "DeJoux System" which as I understood was computerized, and meant that you didn't have to draw every frame. The frames in-between were filled in. When I got there I found that it was actually done with a series of dissolves. You would draw frame "A" and you would draw frame "D" and the dissolve would sort of fill in "B and C." Still, you couldn't draw the frames very far apart. Also, I was drawing it myself onto seventeen millimeter film. I found a great difficulty with that because my drawings are very large, I think in many ways I'm a



frustrated painter. I like to stand on my drawing board and work from my shoulder so I get that sweep from the shoulder. So at first I could only get an eye on it, then I could get an eye and a nose, but after several weeks I had adapted to the medium, and I could get a couple of figures and a background. I didn't know what to draw so I drew everything American I could think of, the Empire State Building, John Wayne, Black Power, Mickey Mouse on drugs. I had a soundtrack with Cheech and Chong. The whole thing was kind of a hallucinatory trip on film.

This was *The Long Drawn Out Trip*?

I called it that for two reasons. Besides the obvious, I was originally supposed to be there for two weeks, and it ended up being ten weeks.

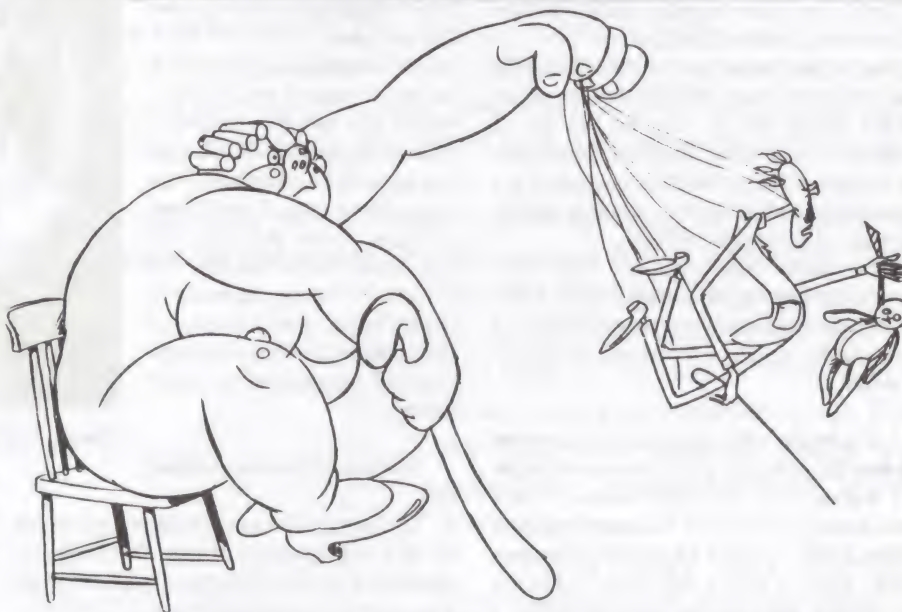
How did Pink Floyd become involved with you?

The members of Pink Floyd saw this when it was shown on the BBC. They then called me up, and asked me to do some animation for their *Wish You Were Here* show. I accepted the offer and they showed this footage on their tour. Between that and *The Wall* I was doing some very limited stop frame animation for the BBC. I would draw a line, take two frames, then add a little more to the line, take another two frames, and let the whole sequence build out. I was also making live action films as well as doing exhibitions and working for the newspapers, so animation was really a small part of my output for that period.

Unfortunately, I haven't seen the *Wish You Were Here* animation. What I have seen of your's tends to be very dark, especially in *The Wall*. Is this a common theme in your work or is some of it the influence of Roger Waters?

No, I think it was the way I looked at drawing. Roger came to me because he knew that was the way I thought. Obviously, the drawings were inspired by the lyrics he had written, but in some ways it worked the other way too. For instance, when he spoke about the forms of repression in *The Wall*, I thought the best way to symbolize this would be with a hammer. So, then Roger would write about the hammer in the lyrics. It was more of a two-way process.

All of my work has always been pretty dark. I've been asked why, and I don't really know. Maybe it has something to do with my early childhood. Being bedridden and in and out of hospitals in the adult section didn't make for a very "light" childhood.



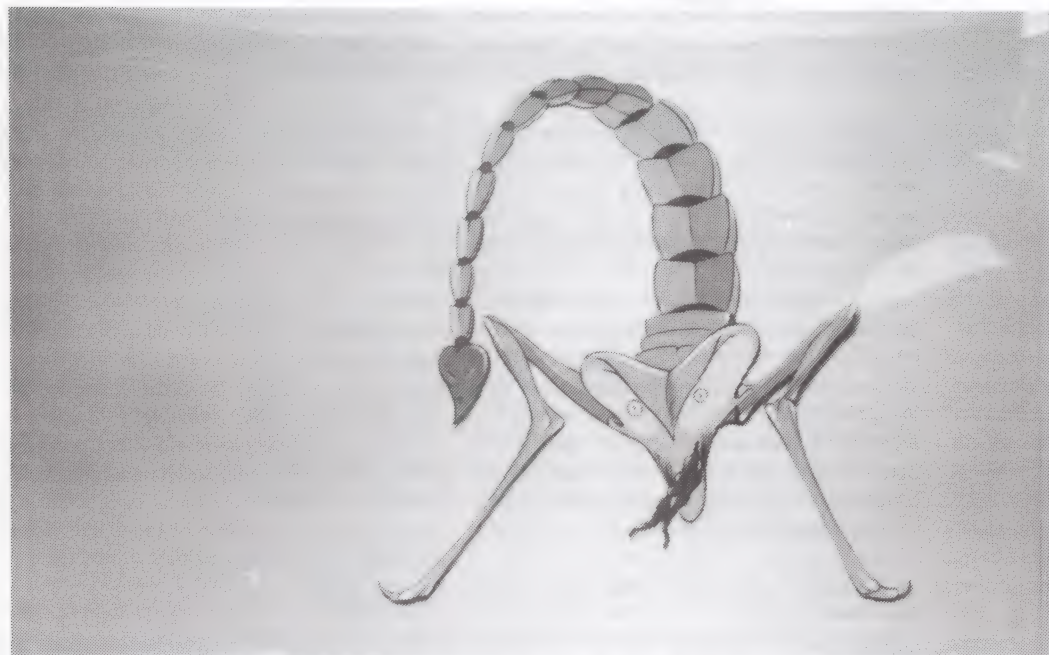
Two pencil drawings from *Pink Floyd The Wall* (courtesy CEL-EBRATION!/
© PoseLane Ltd.)

This was also during World War II.

Yes, I grew up during the War. Of course, I was too young to realize the implications of it. But I do remember being in air raid shelters and bombs dropping over London. When it came to illustrating "Goodbye Blue Skies," which was about the war period, I felt very strongly about it.

How did Roger Waters, Alan Parker, and yourself go about the creative process, and how did some of these intense images come about?

First of all, it was Roger and me working on the images for the show before the film was thought of. Although Roger had always wanted to make a film of it, we didn't do that for a couple of years. The images were created for the show to be shown on their screen. We also had three projectors lined up, so the whole of the wall that was built across the stadium had animated film projected onto it. Because of the size of the show we were only able to present it in a few venues. A lot of people heard of it and wanted to see it, so that inspired the film, I suppose. Roger thought that Alan Parker should



The detail in the drawing can be seen in this cel from *Pink Floyd The Wall* (courtesy CEL-EBRATION!// © PoseLane Ltd.)

be the director because he's English, and therefore he would understand about the war and losing one's father in the war. So Alan Parker was brought in and the creative process then started off with the three of us sitting in my house in London. We had many, many meetings, where we discussed what it could do and what it should look like. Previously I had done all this with Roger. I would make sketches, put them on the wall, and then we would discuss how it should look, the normal kind of animation/design process.

Eventually, we moved to Pinewood where we had what Alan Parker called "The War Room." It had kind of a story board all around the walls, of the whole film really, including the live action because I designed the live action as well when it came to the surreal images. For instance, in the movie there are kids being processed on conveyor belts and put through mincers. All of that is sort of based on my drawings, which are almost identical to the images. They built a complete maze which the kids are marched around. A lot of this had to do with my childhood because as I've said, my schooling wasn't particularly happy because I was always away so much. I was continually mystified as to what was going on. The maze to me was like the maze of childhood, and school. You are ushered around this maze, and you don't know where you are or where it leads or

how it relates to anything else. So I would have a little drawing of a maze and then suddenly it was a \$300,000.00 set at Pinewood. That was quite daunting.

I can understand why this would be such a good collaboration between you and Roger, you seem to have fairly similar backgrounds.

Yes, we did have similar backgrounds, we're both English, Roger is younger than me, but he did have that wartime experience through his father.

The collaboration went along okay for a while, but then it became very tricky because Alan Parker, naturally, wanted to take over the film. He was the director. Roger and I had already created much of the film for the show. So towards the end it became very difficult for the three of us to work together. People have said, "you put three megalomaniacs in a room together and what do you expect." I think a lot of that was reflected in the film, the angst and anxiety and strong feelings came out in the film.

Yes, the whole film really has that feeling of being on edge all the way through it. Did you have any idea while you were making *The Wall* that it would have as much impact as it did, and did it end up the way you wanted it to?

Of course you never know when you're

working on something how successful it's going to be. Pink Floyd were extremely successful, so anything that they do should be successful, but that doesn't automatically follow that it will be. Everybody produces bummers and flops, and it's nothing to do with money or talent. Mostly it's luck. So to answer your question, no, I had no idea. I just went about it like any other job. It was a very long job to do and very painful at some points as I've said. When I'd finished it I went around America promoting it with Bob Geldof, and we didn't often go in to see the film because we were so tired of it. As with every work you complete all you see are the things that are wrong with it. I never compliment myself on what I've done, I usually say that should have been better, and that didn't achieve what I wanted it to achieve. So my feelings

initially were of disappointment and relief that it was over. Since the days of the premier I haven't looked at it. It's not just that particular project, I'm like that with all of my projects. I direct live action here at the BBC, and when they've been shown I've never looked at them again. It's not that I'm avoiding it, I've lost interest and I'm on to the next thing.

The animation in *The Wall* has a very unique look to it. It's very sharp and bold. To me, it looked like animated oil paintings. What mediums did you use to get this look?

I think the first problem I had when I hired all these animators was that they were all "Disney" trained. Disney, *Tom and Jerry*, but Disney in particular had a very strong effect on the industry. I always say when I'm asked about this that I would have been fascinated to learn what one could do with animation and that's what I've tried to do. Just imagine what Picasso or Matisse would have done with animation. They would have done something that wasn't kind of cute. It's an art form that in many ways is still unexplored. I know a lot of experimentation has gone on, but it's never really been taken for the art form. I think it could be actual moving art.

Not that I don't admire Disney, in fact, I'm working with them now. But they certainly had an effect on the industry. To get back to what I



was saying, I hired these animators that were all trained in the sort of squash and bounce school of animation. To get them to think in a different way was really very difficult. Luckily, I found a couple of key artists who understood that I wanted to make this look different and feel different, sort of moving art. We tried everything. We tried in crayon, we tried in paint, chalk, all sorts of ways of doing it so there isn't anything particularly consistent about it. A lot of it is very experimental and some of it works and some of it doesn't. For instance, the flowers were drawn in colored pencil and each one of those colored pencil drawings took probably a couple of days to do, so it was crazy the amount of work that went into them. These drawings are now on sale. When I went to see them in a gallery here in London I thought that they were really worthy of hanging on the wall because they're more than the average cell, they're more like paintings.

They're very rich.

As you know animation is very expensive, and it was only something like Pink Floyd that could afford to finance this kind of output. To get back to the question we tried every medium we could. In a way "The Trial" at the end of *The*

Wall was my least favorite bit because it was sort of standard animation. I think my favorite was "Goodbye Blue Skies."

I was about 13 the first time I saw *The Wall* and I vividly remember being floored when I saw the "Goodbye Blue Skies" sequence. Besides being a great song, the images were very powerful and went perfectly with the music.

In fact, that was one of the only sequences that was designed specifically for the movie. A lot of the other bits were taken from the show and made to fit. The "Goodbye Blue Skies" was designed with the track, which you can't do for a live show because at live shows they don't keep strictly to the frame. A lot of the images had to be free standing images that didn't key into each note of the music.

What are some recent things that you've been working on?

Last year I was doing quite a bit of theatrical work. I did Mozart's Magic Flute in the Los Angeles Opera. That was fascinating to be able to paint a whole stage, to design the scenery and costumes. When it works, opera is magnificent

because it is the vision and the music together, and it has a grandeur that is hard to beat anywhere. Since February I've been working with Disney. I'm a design consultant on one of their forthcoming animation features. So that's been almost a whole year of my life. I'm doing very much what I did on *The Wall* there as much as I'm designing, but I'm not directing, which I did on *The Wall* I'm not sure I could go back to directing animation. It's so painstaking and it takes so long. Animators naturally have their own rhythm and their own speed. I'm kind of an impetuous artist. I like to get it done, see what it looks like and if it's no good, throw it away and start again. But you can't do that in animation. I'd try to get the animators going and sort of push them along and it would just upset them. They'd go fast for a couple of hours and then go slower than before. I found animation, although fascinating, very time consuming, to direct.



[Editor's note: ANIMATO! wishes thanks Pam Martin of CEL-EBRATION! for her help in setting up this interview.]

Darris McFarland is a musician whose band, Tragic Jack, tours through New England.





MAKING *THE SECRET ADVENTURES OF TOM THUMB*: INTERVIEW WITH THE BOLEX BROTHERS

ANIMATO!'s British correspondent speaks with the creators of the new cult hit

by Andrew Osmond

The Secret Adventures of Tom Thumb has been acclaimed by critics around the world. It won awards in Spain, Portugal, Houston and San Francisco, including the Golden Gate Award for best Animation.

The film was written, edited and directed by Dave Borthwick and produced by Richard Hutchinson. Together they formed the **Bolex Brothers**, (pronounced I hasten to add 'bowl-ex,' after their favourite camera.)

The **Bolexes** are based in Bristol, which rivals South Wales as a focus for commercial and experimental animation. The company rubs shoulders with Aardman, A for Animation, CMTB and Hellapoppin Pictures, among others. When I met them, Borthwick and Hutchinson were in the middle of blocking out preliminary sets for a Coca Cola Fanta commercial. Borthwick did most of the talking with Hutchinson occasionally adding remarks. As their two earlier Fanta commercials won awards in Holland and Charleston, I suspect they have another hit on their hands.

***The Secret Adventures of Tom Thumb* combines three dimensional animation with pixilation, the technique of animating human actors frame by frame. Why did you decide to do it that way?**

It really goes back to short films we were making from the mid-Eighties onwards; four, five minutes long. There were a couple of music groups that we made films for, one of which was *Startled Insects*, who did the incidentals for the final film. [The theme was written by John Paul Jones of *Led Zeppelin*.] They used to be a performance band, and most of their films were promotional animations. We did four-minute pictures with titles like *Creatures* and *Igor's Horn*. I'd done a couple of short films at the BBC prior to that, where I first started playing around with pixilation. I'd always been interested in that side of it.

Pixilation really came about because we made such low-budget films. We couldn't afford

to make models so we tended to work with ready-mades, anything we could find around the house; Action Men and things like that. And of course one of the best ready-mades you can get is the human body. In terms of joints all the stuff is already there.

Pixilation goes back to the Fifties, but rather than just doing it as a slapstick effect, people flying round the room doing odd things and so forth, I was interested in getting pixilated actors interacting with the model animation. The technique makes it possible to have actors working with models without the need of costly post-production to marry animation and live action. As well as being expensive, such post-production gives us two separate elements which can be unconvincing because the look of live action is different. Pixilation makes it easier to establish a fantasy and maintain its potency.

What were the difficulties with the technique?

Well, obviously, the actors had to perform in the same way as models in order to get single framed. So, a problem was that actors had to "split up" an action into increments of 12 or 24 per second. There really is a problem if you only got a Bolex camera. If you're doing it "wild" - everything in *Tom Thumb* is shot through a lens; you've got to keep positions absolutely rigid between frames while animating the model. I always use this figure, but a movement that lasts four or five seconds on screen could take three, four hours to shoot.

As the project developed, we were able to afford video assist, which kept a record of the last frame shot with a person, and compared it with the frame we were about to shoot. That meant if the actors moved a bit we could correct them back. Most of my work during the shooting was making sure the actors' positions were right, as well as checking the model being animated.

We found that actors per se, these actors found it difficult to grasp the idea of working in increments. All they wanted to do was 'perform.' So, rather than actors, we ended up working with colleagues who understood the technique. We were lucky a lot of these people were quite weird looking anyway, which we wanted for the film. All the "actors" are animation people:

animators, set-builders, model-makers...most of the film was done with a crew of six or seven people. And for the crowd scenes, we just rang up friends, some people in Aardman and got them down,

Is there an underlying meaning to the film?

Tom Thumb has the kind of story which doesn't necessarily spell things out A-to-Z. I really like narratives which leave a little space for the viewer. Film lays everything up on the screen, and there's a great danger of short-circuiting the most important part of the process, which is the viewer's imagination. One way you can redress the balance is to leave a little space in the narrative. I'm very aware that people spend too much of their time watching films trying to understand them, which to me is a very pedestrian way of watching a film. They should be trying to feel them.

There's a basic story: *Tom Thumb* is born in unlikely circumstances, he's kidnapped, taken into a lab, escapes from there, and meets Jack the Giant Killer. Jack wants to get into the lab to destroy the Ultimate Weapon, thus ridding the world of giants he sees as a scourge on the earth. That's the basic story, read per se, but there are many other levels it works one. For example, I think it can be interpreted as the dreams of the unborn; like, when you die, all your life is supposed to be off-loaded, and you get it flashing by you; maybe, there's an element of reincarnation in there.

The BBC brief was to reinterpret a classic fairy tale, and make it effective for an audience today. We tend to distance ourselves from fairy tales as adults, because they're twee and anodyne and set in some never-never land. But when you read a kid a fairy tale, it scares the shit out of them when they go to sleep, and the adults think they're doing a good turn! I wanted to turn the tables a bit, make a film that would affect adults that deeply. The way to do that was to put in contemporary elements they could relate to.

We wanted to make *Tom Thumb* something other than the perfect little human figure, like Russ Tamblyn did in the American version, being very cute. [Editor's note: George Pal produced the 1958 musical fantasy.] One way of making that more immediate was making *Tom* into a miscarried fetus, or even an aborted



Nick Upton as Dad with Tom in *The Secret Adventures of Tom Thumb*



Richard Hutchinson (left) and Dave Borthwick (right).

one that actually survives. It seems interesting to create initially repulsive characters, and then get the audience to endear to them. For example, in the film, Tom comes out bloody and not very nice looking at all. He would get this initial reaction of "God, that's horrible!" but then within minutes we would get the audience going, "Ahh, isn't he lovely!"

I did the same with the father figure and other characters in the film. I was particularly interested in Tom and the humans. The fact is, the humans aren't necessarily malicious, just stupid and inept and clumsy, not understanding the damage they're doing. Things like the way they treat animals in the laboratory. These were all apt subjects to be treated by the film.

In general, I tried to create a world you couldn't quite put your finger on; whether it was in the past, future or some really demented present. That's good for me, because it needs to be something that's quite timeless. Once you can put it in the past or future, you can say, "Well, it's not here now so it doesn't bother us." I wanted *Tom Thumb* to affect people now, even if they're not sure why they're being affected. For me, that's great. I'm not sure in whether people can rationalise it; in fact, if they've got space to rationalise it, it might be failing them a bit. I wanted it to get to the gut.

We've all got these deep, darker areas in our psyche, and the film's very much in those areas. On that level, you might touch people's

darker parts, that they don't want touched. For me that's the bit I'm interested in touching.

Flies and insects figure prominently in Tom's world.

Yes, the fly image is always there. Tom was, in a sense, a lord of the flies. They have a place in the film as important as anything else. They take Tom to themselves; he's separated out from the other characters when they demonstrate an affinity with them. The halo is the obvious image, and the viewer probably won't get it 'til then, but as the film progresses we see flies being part of the pestilent atmosphere.

There's a point halfway through when Tom lifts one of them onto his hand. He's at ease with them, and they trust him and by the end of the film he almost represents what they are. That's why they follow him through from one adventure to the next. They're not a negative element.

Admittedly, there are people who can't watch the film because they hate insects. That kind of paranoia has always been a very weird idea to me. For me, flies and insects probably "belong" on this planet more than we do. They're part of the real stuff of life. There's a lot more of them than there are of us, and if anything's going to survive an eco-disaster, it's them. I see them as being a tremendously strong relation.

The Secret Adventures of Tom Thumb

has been a hit in Germany, Japan, Spain and the US. How do account for its international appeal?

No dialogue! I've always felt you work in animation, which is such a visual medium, any film that gets the story over without dialogue is going to have an international audience. A live action film might be quite colloquial in terms of the style and the issues it's addressing. Animation tends to be about fantasy or surrealism, or things quite common around the world. Everybody's imagination will respond to certain triggers, and animation is one of the best.

We had mumbles and grunts in the film, of course, but everybody understands those. (People really do talk like that in Bristol! You can sit in a pub for an hour and listen to monosyllabic dialogue where people don't actually say anything at all.) It's done through tone and inference.

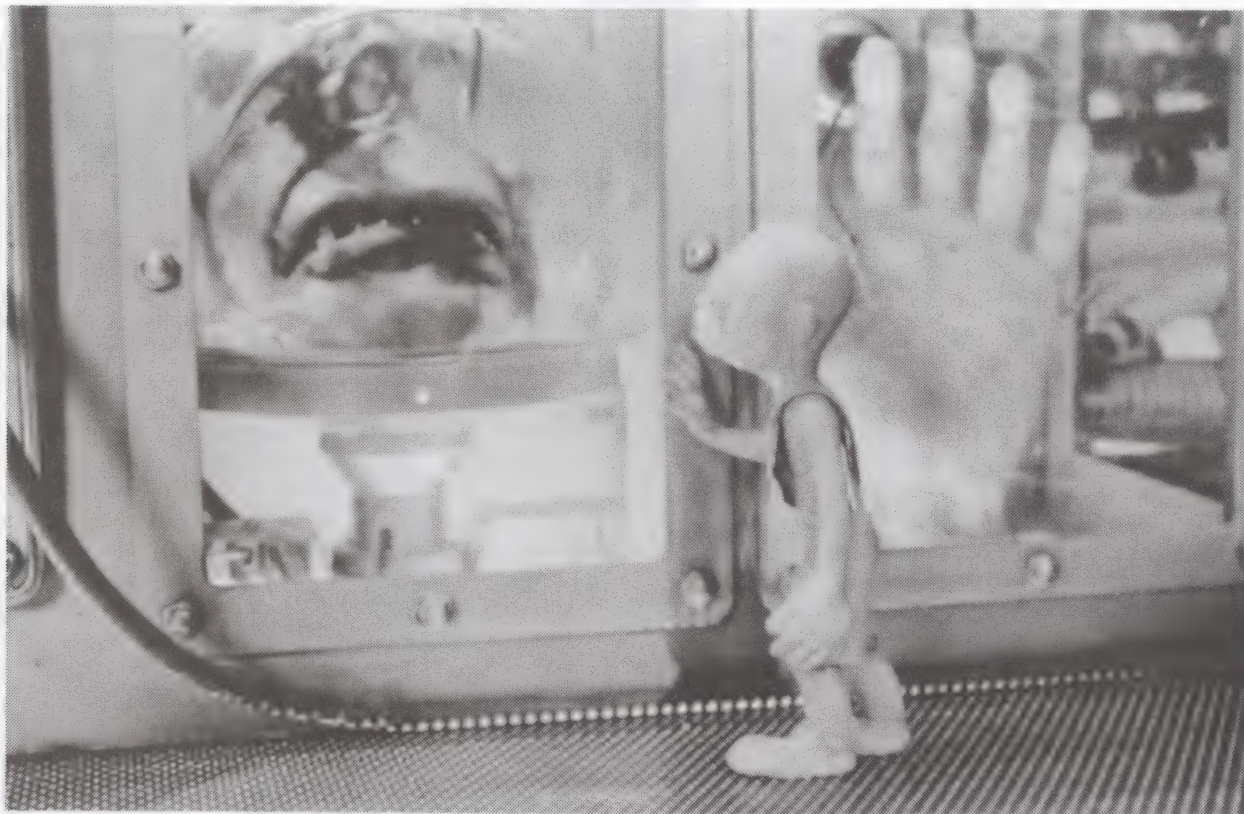
I see dialogue as one of those things where if you can get away without it, don't use it. Visuals are a stronger way of getting it over. There's always a risk that dialogue double-states what you seeing on a visual level anyway.

A number of critics have compared *Tom Thumb* to the films of other animators; for example, the Brothers Quay or Jan Svankmajer.

They quite superficial comparisons, I think. Certainly, if I've got any influences they don't come from animation films. I've put a lot down to my own bloody childhood, which was much weirder than the film, I can tell you. A lot of people do have very weird backgrounds. I know people who live much stranger lives than those in *Tom Thumb*, so I see us as just scratching the surface of what a weird life really is.

If there were film influences they would probably come from live action films. My background was love action, and the films that really made me sit up and think were those by Nicholas Roeg, who used an editing style which fractured and dissected the sequence of events, backward and forward. They gave you an impression of the story, rather than pedestrian, one step after another narrative. The viewers' imagination was needed to fill in the cement of the things. Film has hung on to a well-tried formula for 70, 80 years. It's a very sophisticated medium that isn't used anywhere near its potential.

I don't watch a lot of films. There's a frustration that applies to anyone in the creative



In one of the film's most disturbing scenes, Tom meets the fellow inhabitants of the laboratory.

medium. You come up with an idea and you think, "Wow that's a great idea," and then you realize it's a complete copy of something you saw ten years ago. I'm paranoid about watching stuff, and polluting my head with other people's ideas. I'm a firm believer in the principle that a good book or radio play is going to have much more effect on you than a film, because your imagination is creating something totally unique.

Can you tell me about the process by which you got into animation?

I studied graphics, and went from there to lighting and design. In the Sixties, I did light shows for bands and theater, and that's where a start of the 2-D animation techniques came out. I didn't stay on that side of it for long, though, I went into multi-media theater where I designed projected backgrounds and special effects into the mid-Seventies. Film just seemed a natural progression because of the interests I had; specifically, projected interests.

I did a one-year crash course at Bristol University, which was then a very good course, but I went in just wanting to do animation, and came out a cameraman. I worked on TV and documentary films, both in the UK and

Denmark, but it wasn't until I came back to Bristol, and started doing odd jobs for Island Records and the BBC, that I started making short films. They were all very low budget, being BBC, and the ones where we couldn't afford actors we did as animation. At that time, I was working with Dave Riddett, a freelance cameraman from Aardman, and Nick Upton, who played Tom's dad in *Tom Thumb*.

Can you describe what it was like making animated promotion for the music business?

For me, making films for the music business is very akin to the advertising world in that musicians are uneducated in what it takes to make animation. To them, a promo is made in a day. I remember when I spoke to a group called Sheep on Drugs about animation. I told them that to make any amount of film I'd need three days. They nearly choked on their drinks. They just didn't think that way. Even though they wanted to be pixilated and all, the thought of spending that long on something was ludicrous. Musicians think animation is something you can shoot in the same as you can shoot a live action promo.

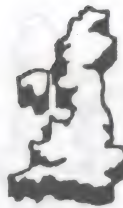
So in that sense it was not a satisfying

experience for me. It's rare, I think to get a situation like *Sledgehammer*, which was totally pixilated. I was on the set for much of the time it was being animated in Bristol, and Peter Gabriel was willing to come along and sit there for a week, being pixilated and animated, dedicating that much time to it. He obviously knew the potential.

What things does an independent animator need to survive?

First, you need a market, sources of income, backing, investment. Then you need potential audiences. I think the audiences are there, really. You just need channels to get your films to them. Those channels are more specific than they were ten years ago, when there weren't anywhere near the means for animators to get their work shown. Since then, though, we've had things like "Cartoon," part of the EC budget dedicated to putting development money into independent animations.

All the same, it's one thing having the market to send these things to, it's quite another having the environment in which animators can grow and develop their skills. You don't necessarily need animation schools or even



film schools; what we're getting now is a lot of art schools running animation courses as part of their graphics course. But they're usually underfunded and unequipped, if anything students probably turn out work, despite, the college. What probably happens is that weaker elements are weeded out, leaving those who really want to do animation.

I was with Nick Park at a talk in London, and we realized none of us had been trained in animation. We were all trained in film making; animation just happened to be the side of film-making were interested in. For us, it was a matter of using the film making to accommodate our interests.

There are two or three schools in England who have a reasonable turnout of animation students, the obvious ones are the Royal College, Farnham and the National Film School at Beaconsfield. Newport in Wales has a very good school, because of the Welsh animator Joanna Quinn (creator of *Girl's Night Out* and other shorts), but there's a lot to be done yet.

There's an obvious lack of communication between the courses and the studios which do exist. A lot of people just "happen upon" studios. We've got a school here in Bristol, and we've tried, rather than go down to teach the students, to get the students doing work experience in the studio where they'd learn a lot more. But there's

no kind of procedure to allow that, which is crazy. So what you get is studios needing new blood and it not coming in. It's a very random process.

For me, a complete new door opened with animation. I realized that, as a film maker I could actually do everything, rather than be part of a crew in one role: cameraman, director or whatever. Suddenly we were working in film in a way you could do everything yourself. For a film maker it seemed the perfect way to make films. I never went back to live action again after that. I spent quite a few years than living on the breadline, but really getting my rocks off with the films we were making, and it's a result of those films that we got an invitation to so the pilot for the BBC.

The original version of *Tom Thumb* was made in 1988 as a ten minute pilot for a BBC series called *Nursery Crimes*. The rest of the series was never made. Can you talk about that a bit?

The ten minute pilot was very much an exercise to see if we could control pixilation. As I said, I was beguiled by the interaction between pixilation and models. I could see there was something strong there. I could see there was potential. I thought it would be interesting to try to control the pixilation to the extent we could

actors working not only in terms of movement, but in terms of expressions and characterizations, able to create and sustain a character through a piece of drama.

For me, the frustration was this pilot film. When you're trying to deal with that level of emotional involvement, eight minutes is't long enough to give you a let-down on it, it's hit and run. The thing started up without pulling punches, and then just stopped. I think that's inherent in a pilot film.

I must admit it surprised me that it was as well received as it was. If the feature film leaves people wondering, then the pilot would certainly have, because it just stops dead. The pilot doesn't exist anymore, incidentally, but bits of it were incorporated into the beginning of the feature.

Some reports suggest the BBC switchboard was jammed with complaints after the screening of the pilot. Is this true?

A lot of that was misreporting. There was a bit of a problem, because there was confusion in the Beeb about this thing being put out at Christmas. The trouble was that they saw about 45 seconds of the work in progress, and it happened to be the cutest bit, where Tom is being dressed by his dad on the table.

Naturally, they thought, "Great, animation films, we'll put it on at Christmas time." It was



Jack, and a reluctant Tom, prepares to battle the "big people."



shown at nine in the evening, the day after Boxing Day. We tried to dissuade them, partly because we hadn't expected to finish the pilot by then. We'd been promised an open-ended deadline, and they suddenly scheduled it for Christmas, which meant we rushed like hell to get the last bit finished.

The BBC was apprehensive at first, but to their credit they went with the film. There was some inaccurate reporting of what went on which made the Beeb out to be a bit inept, and I'm at pains to say that generally they were very supportive.

What happened, basically, was that the pilot was shown, and there were phone calls afterward from people who did not like it at all. A significant number said it was perverted and the wrong thing to be shown at Christmas, quite right, of course. Consequently, the film really went on the backburner as far as the Beeb was concerned. BBC Enterprises tried to get funding to take the thing further, but didn't have much luck.

The film sat around for about a year and a half. In the meantime, I spoke to other animators, including Pete Lord of Aardman, who said "Look, you want to try to get the film seen at festivals, get some feedback." But Roy Chapman, the producer who had originally commissioned it, was tied down by an obscure ruling in the BBC charter. This said that BBC material couldn't be screened to fee-paying audiences. Peter said they had the same problem with their children's character "Morph"; they'd just shown it without a big problem. So, somewhat surreptitiously, we got a print from the BBC, and sent it off to a couple of festivals. In all, the pilot won four awards round the world, in Germany, Japan, Spain and the US.

By that time, I had formed the **bolex brothers** with "Hutch" Hutchinson, who was getting investments from the music business. Manga Video was on board as well. The people involved with that had been with Island Records in the early days. We had made promos for them. The guy who ran the English side of Manga was a keen fan, and Manga put some development money into the feature script. Then the BBC had a change of regime, and came back on board as well, and a producer called Colin Rose commissioned us.

What are your plans for the future?

We try to have a policy that we don't just make commercials all the time. That's a trap a lot of small animators fall into; it's a lucrative business and several studios born with a good film end up spending all their time on

commercials. Most studios either run with that temptation or find themselves with a dilemma; they realize they're not doing the work they want to.

What we try to ensure is we don't spend more than a certain portion of the year making commercials. The most useful way to work with them is to use them and generate money quickly. That way you can buy yourself free time and use it to make commissioned films. We don't want to end up with a showreel that's all commercials. It's the films we want to show people afterward.

We're selective about what commercials we do as well. Commercials may generate a lot of money, but they're bloody hard work, and if you're not doing what you want to be doing, it's an awful way to make some.

Have you got another film in store?

We're writing it at the moment! There's a lot of pressure within ourselves, because of the way Tom exceeded expectations. For us, *Tom* was a project we wanted to do, we didn't give a hell what happened to it afterwards. As it turned out, it was better received than we ever hoped it would be. It's reassuring to know that people lock into the same things as we do.

That's obviously inspired us to take the technique further, not just in the animation world, but live action as well. Most of the festivals I've been to in the last year have been live action, where Tom's been one of the few animations in there. Live action people have been beguiled with it, so clearly there's a wider potential than just animation.

It's easier now to get money for a feature film than for a short. It used to be the other way around. Ten years ago, if you wanted ten or 15 minutes, great, anything more than that, and it was totally different world, where only Disney

and Don Bluth could survive. Nowadays, it's much more likely you'll get money for features, because they're being looked at theatrically as well as anything else.

The new film will take pixilation a lot further. We learned a lot on *Tom Thumb*. It opened up pointers as to how we could develop the techniques in more sophisticated ways. I'm very interested in the gap between animation and live action, and turning out an animated films that looks like live action.

Finally, would you ever envisage *The Further Adventures of Tom Thumb*?

If there ever were further adventures, they would be something completely different. Tom 50 years on, perhaps. For me, the end of *Tom Thumb* is the perfect set-up for a sequel, but the options are completely open. He could go into any kind of adventure. He's only a babe so he could grow into any kind of man or beast. On the other hand, I'd rather leave the sequel to the imagination of the viewer.

Author's note: The core team for *The Secret Adventures of Tom Thumb* consisted of Dave Borthwick, Nick Upton, the production manager Mike Gifford, John Schofield (who worked with Borthwick in his theater days), and Lee Wilton, model maker and assistant animator. The sets were created using materials taken from local dumps and skips. The film had its British premiere at the 1993 London Film festival.

In issue 29, it was wrongly stated that Steve Box was involved with *The Secret Adventures of Tom Thumb*. My apologies for any confusion caused.

Andrew Osmond is the British correspondent for ANIMATO!

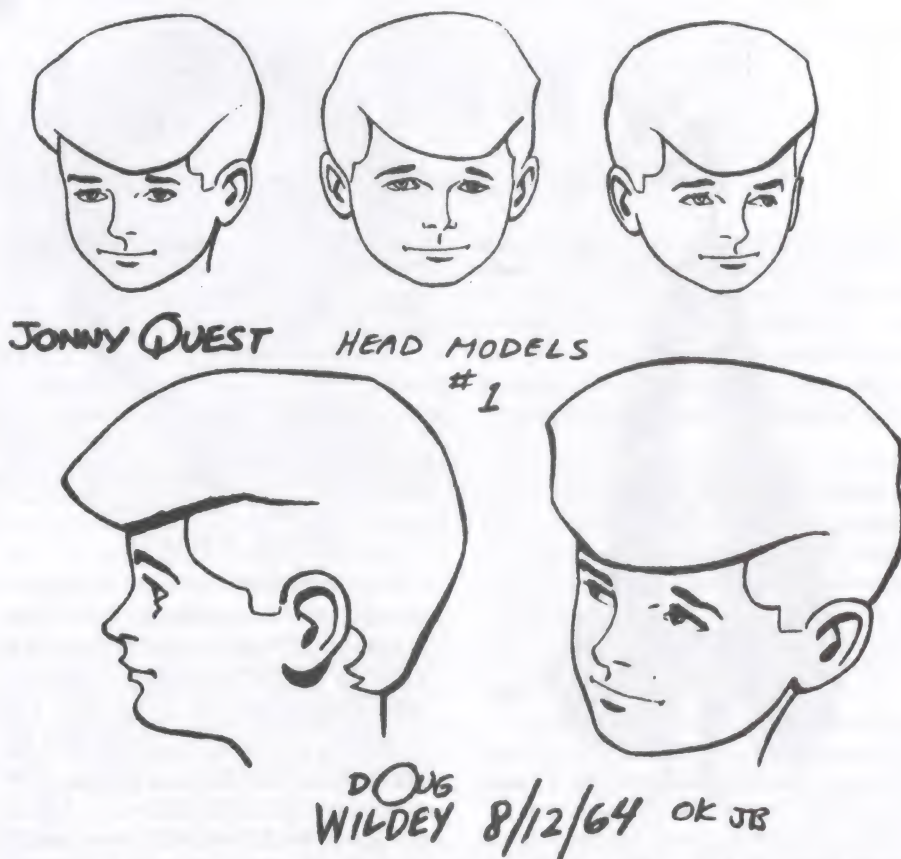


Creator of Jonny Quest Passes

Doug Wildey left us on Oct. 4, 1994. He dies at age 72 in his Las Vegas home of heart failure. The legend is that Doug was a cowboy before his love of drawing roped him into a career of comics and animation; I have no idea if that's true or not but as they said in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, "print the legend."

Born in Yonkers, NY, Wildey began cartooning for his base newspaper while in the military during WWII. His first pro job was drawing for the comic title *Buffalo Bill*, initiating a run of westerns for as variety of publishers through the 1940s and '50s. *Hopalong Cassidy*, *Lash LaRue* and Marvel Comics' *Outlaw Kid* - Doug drew them all, returning to the genre in the 1980s to delineate the adventures of his own western hero *Rio* (published respectively by Eclipse, Comico and Dark Horse Comics). His adventure comic work included a stint on the comic strip *The Saint* (1959-62), a visit to prehistoric Pellucidar in Gold Key's *Tarzan* (including a Stegosaurus which flew!), *Korak, Son of Tarzan*, and in the 1970s, a run on DC's *Sgt. Rock*, *Jonah Hex*, and original detective strip in Joe Kubert's short-lived anthology *Sojourn*, and the syndicated strip *Ambler*. I was fortunate enough to see Doug's unpublished artwork for Joe Kubert's aborted DC Comics title *Savage World*; his bold brooding depiction of a shark's aquatic life remain etched in my memory.

It was Wildey's sense of high adventure that earned his place in the animation hall of fame. After collaborating with fellow comic book veteran Alex Toth on the syndicated animated series *Space Angel*, Wildey was hired by Hanna-Barbera to help design a planned animated TV series based on the radio show Jack Armstrong. Wildey's work so impressed his bosses that plans were scrapped on the adaptation series to allow Doug to create an original prime-time animated adventure series. *Jonny Quest* debuted on ABC Sept. 18, 1964, and an entire generation of young viewers, myself included, revelled in the colorful procession of adventure, fantasy and science fiction archetypes in exotic



Detail from a *Jonny Quest* model sheet by Doug Wildey (© 1963 Hanna-Barbers Productions, Inc.)

locales. The weekly dose of high-tech espionage, lost worlds, resurrected mummies, living dinosaurs, madmen and monsters lasted only a single season, but it remains a high-water mark in TV animation (and became the only animated series to eventually play all three major American networks). Though Wildey would be forever the series harshest critic, (he particularly hated the studio's insistence on adding the character of "that goddamned little dog" Bandit), *Jonny Quest* remains Wildey's most popular and durable creation in any medium.

Along with comic book vets Alex Toth and Russ Heath, Wildey earned a healthier living in the animation fields than was possible for his generation in the comic book industry. After *Jonny Quest*, Wildey worked on the *Submariner* episodes of *Marvel Super-Heroes*, *Return to the Planet of the Apes*, and stayed with Hanna-Barbera

for *The Fantastic Four*, *The Herculoids*, *The Mighty Mightor*, and (as producer) *Godzilla* and *Jana of the Jungle*. Among the young talent Wildey ushered into the field was Dave Stevens, who later patterned his *Rocketeer* character "Peevy" after his mentor and friend...yet another legacy Wildey has left with us.

I was fortunate enough to enjoy a single, wonderful evening with Doug and Ellen Wildey a few years ago, compliments of my dear fiends Diana Schutz and Bob Schreck. It was a warm, loving and lively evening of conversation that lasted long into the wee hours. I regret that our paths never crossed again. Happy Trails, Doug and God bless you, Ellen. Until we meet again...

SR Bissette

Young Readers' Page



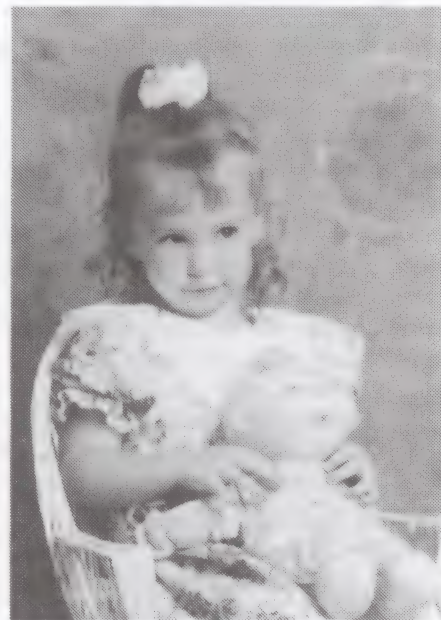
© 1994 Stephanie McFarland



Stephanie McFarland
Olney, Maryland

Stephanie McFarland is a regular contributor to *Animato!* More like a seasoned veteran, Stephanie has been in every issue since she was eleven-years-old with art and reviews. In April, Steph will be thirteen. Vanessa Coffey may want to sign Stephanie to a firm contract with Nickelodeon before Ted Turner discovers *Animato!*'s youngest contributor.

Breanna is too young to read our magazine. However, Kim Rossmeisl tells us that Breanna insists on *Animato!* for her bedtime stories. Every night this wonderful little girl by-passes stacks of children's books for Ralph Bakshi's colorful cover art. Kim and Kevin Rossmeisl can't wait for a new issue of *Animato!*



Breanna Rossmeisl
Monson, Massachusetts



Sara Ruth
Newark, California



Sara Ruth, age 5, likes to draw animals, so she sent *Animato!* two drawings of her favorite lions. We like her style.

A L I O N



It's Baaack!

The 1994-95

ANIMATO! Film Poll

What do you think is the best in animation? The film poll tells all!

Introduction by Tim Smith

The ANIMATO! Film Poll is new, expanded, and best of all, it's back! We've added some new categories, and the tabulation of votes on the old categories is also new, consisting only of ballots received since the return of the poll was announced in ANIMATO! #29.

The response has been overwhelming, and as promised, we've pulled some names out of the hat to receive free ANIMATO! tee shirts. New ballots and revised ballots are all welcome, and we'll continue to reward our voters with bountiful prize giveaways.

Rejuvenating the poll also brought about an interesting and rewarding array of suggestions, love letters and advice. We will relentlessly endeavor to revamp and improve our format in response to your input, so keep it coming.

The following is one letter we received, and is a nice example of the type of responses we received:

"Dear ANIMATO!

I love consulting your film poll and comparing the results with my own tastes. However, I wish you would allow us to submit ten favorite characters rather than only five. Also, could you bring down the TV specials to five choices. I had to dig far back to find ten of those.

I wanted to vote for *School House Rock*, but I didn't know under which category. Please inform me on that.

Keep up the good work. You're 100 times better than *Animation Magazine*!

Sincerely,

Alain Dion

Independent Animator"

School House Rock for example, received votes as both a TV Series and a TV Special, and in situations like that we tabulated separate totals in each of the different categories.

Another good example of this crossover concept would be *Mickey's Christmas Carol* which received support as both a TV Special and a Theatrical Short. The most successful crossover entry, however, was *The Snowman* which came in at #11 in the TV Special poll and #18 in the Independent Shorts poll.

The distinctions between animators and

directors was another question which arose in the poll, and obviously there is considerable overlap in that category. Our original intention was for that to be a broad-based category, and the ballots we received reflected that.

There were a few directorial teams whose career were deemed inseparable by most voters, and our poll jointly lists Hanna/Barbera at #5 and Harmon/ Ising at #19. Each of those polls was literally co-directors of most of their films, but a different scenario arises with the team of Max and Dave Fleischer who came in at #6.

Some of the ballots we received just listed Dave Fleischer, reflecting the fact that he alone is given directorial credit on all of the later Fleischer films. But the majority of the ballots listed both brothers despite the fact that by the late Twenties Max has assumed more of a producer role in the workings of the studio.

In a similar scenario, Walt Disney garnered enough votes to place 17th in the poll even though his animating and directing days ended soon after Mickey Mouse uttered his first word.

In the category theatrical shorts, the Warner Brothers Studio is the overall winner here.

I thought there was an interesting comparison to be noted in regard to Warners and Disney. The classic Warners shorts succeed on the basis of superb characterization while the top-rated Disney shorts seem to carve out their niche on more of an historical basis.

Note these top Disney shorts: #5 *The Band Concert* (first color Mickey); #16 *Steamboat Willie* (first sound Mickey); #17 *The Old Mill* (first multi-plane camera); #23 *Der Fuehrer's Face* (first war-themed Oscar winner); #26 *The Skeleton Dance* (first Silly Symphony). For the record, our highest-rated Disney short with no particular historical significance was *Clock Cleaners* at #24.

Warners also placed more character in that category's Top 10 than any other studio. That poll also reveals a drastic need for more great female cartoon characters. After Betty Boop at #7, the only other women in the top 40 are Babs Bunny at #18 and Dot Warner, along with her brothers at #32. In case you're wondering the women closes to cracking the top 40 would be Ariel and Slappy Squirrel, and they're both close.

At the risk of causing a feminist backlash, I thought it rather interesting to note how much

better the women fare in the villains category where they compose a full 20 percent of the top 40. Any further comments in that regard would no doubt cost me my proofreader, so I'll just finish this paragraph by noting that the villains poll does show an interestingly diverse mix of characters from shorts, features and television series.

The full-length poll is Disney-dominated, as one might expect, with only *The Beatles' Yellow Submarine* preventing a clean sweep if the Top 10. After all these years, our readers still agree with the original premise that *Fantasia* "will amaze 'ya!" And just imagine the raging debates when Disney releases the *Fantasia Continued* feature which is currently in the works.

In the TV Series poll, it should be noted that many of the top finishers received "qualified" votes. For example, many of the ballots specified "early episodes" for their *Jetsons* and *Ren and Stimpy* votes, but in terms of our tabulations, it is really impossible to tabulate those separately.

The poll of television series also confirms one historical note. As #1 star Bart Simpson might put it, "In terms of tv animation, the 1970s really sucked." Only one series in the Top 40 debuted during the 1970s, *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* at #38. The only other Top 40 series to spend a significant portions of its run during that decade was *Scooby Doo* (#37).

By their nature, TV Specials are often holiday specials, and that fact is clearly reflected in the poll. The only non-holiday special to crack the Top 10 was *Dr. Seuss' Horton Hears a Who* coming in at #10.

The films of some of our voters appear prominently in the poll of Independent Shorts. Bill Plympton has several films in our Top 40, the highest being *25 Ways to Quit Smoking* at #11, and Marv Newland's *Bambi Meets Godzilla* crashed the poll at #4! Thanks for your ballots, gentlemen.

And thanks to all of you ANIMATO! readers as well. It's been a lot of fun getting the poll up and running again, and we hope our listings will inspire conversation and debate from Bedrock to Whoville, from Wackyland to Frostbite Falls and everywhere in-between.

ANIMATO! wishes to thank Tim Smith for volunteering to run the poll.

CHARACTERS

1. Bugs Bunny

Bugs, like true literary characters, was one of the first cartoon creations with a definite, definable and multifaceted personality. Audiences grew to love Bugs because they knew what would happen in a given situation, and it was not only funny, it made sense!

2. Daffy Duck
3. Donald Duck
4. Popeye
5. Bullwinkle
6. Goofy
7. Betty Boop
8. Yosemite Sam
9. Tasmanian Devil
10. Droopy
11. Foghorn Leghorn
12. Pink Panther
13. Huckleberry Hound
14. Yogi Bear
15. Mickey Mouse
16. Bart Simpson

17. Marvin the Martian
18. Babs Bunny
19. Tom & Jerry
20. Roger Rabbit
21. Screwy Squirrel
22. Woody Woodpecker
23. Felix the Cat
24. Elmer Fudd
25. Mighty Mouse
26. Snagglepuss
27. Wile E. Coyote
28. The Tex Avery Wolf
29. Genie (Aladdin)
30. Duckman
31. Stimp
32. Mr. Magoo
33. Road Runner
34. Animaniacs
35. Porky Pig
36. Homer Simpson
37. Tweety
38. Jack Skellington
39. Fred Flintstone
40. Sylvester



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VILLAINS

1. Wile E. Coyote

Chuck Jones once described Wile as a true fanatic: someone who redoubles his efforts while forgetting his goals. Although considered a bad guy, many an animation fan has taken pity on him and rooted for his success.

2. Boris Badenov
3. Yosemite Sam
4. The Grinch
5. Cruella DeVil
6. The Tex Avery Wolf
7. Snidely Whiplash
8. Chernobog
9. Captain Hook
10. Jafar
11. Bluto
12. Stromboli
13. Dishonest John
14. Maleficent
15. Simon Bar Sinister
16. Scar
17. Dick Dastardly
18. Negaduck
19. The Joker
20. Marvin the Martian
21. Magica De Spell
22. Natasha Fatale
23. Sideshow Bob

24. Ursula
25. Don Karnage
26. Madame Mim
27. Montgomery Burns
28. Oil Can Harry
29. Ratigan
30. Shere Khan
31. Wicked Queen (Snow White)
32. Cinderella's Stepmother
33. Blackwolf (Wizards)
34. Merlock
35. Monstro
36. Tasmanian Devil
37. Beagle Boys
38. Black Pete
39. Daffy Duck
40. Dijon



© Warner Brothers Productions

FULL LENGTH FEATURES

1. Fantasia

Walt Disney's 1940 gamble is in many ways still a controversial film over 50 years after its release. While historians argue over the obscuring of racial stereotypes originally found in the film, and musicians continue to debate if particular images should be assigned to classical music by someone other than a composer, one can not deny the beauty of the animation and design and the daring of Disney's vision.

2. Pinocchio
3. The Little Mermaid
4. Aladdin
5. Yellow Submarine
6. Who Framed Roger Rabbit
7. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
8. Dumbo
9. Beauty and the Beast
10. The Lion King
11. Fritz the Cat
12. 101 Dalmations
13. The Nightmare Before Christmas

14. The Jungle Book
15. The Secret of N.I.M.H.
16. Peter Pan
17. The Great Mouse Detective
18. Bambi
19. Cinderella
20. Allegro Non Troppo
21. Lady and The Tramp
22. Sleeping Beauty
23. Robin Hood
24. Watership Down
25. An American Tail
26. The Lord of the Rings
27. Wizards
28. FernGully
29. Alice in Wonderland
30. The Land Before Time
31. American Pop
32. Song of the South
33. The Rescuers Down Under
34. The Tune
35. Heavy Traffic
36. Akira
37. The Black Cauldron
38. All Dogs Go To Heaven



©Walt Disney Productions

39. Cool World
40. Mr. Bug Goes To Town

ANIMATORS / DIRECTORS

1. Chuck Jones

For the general public, Charles "Chuck" Jones is perhaps only second in name recognition to Walt Disney as a creator of animation. The creator of *The Roadrunner* and *Wile E. Coyote*, the man who directed such great cartoons as *Duck Amuck* and *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* (other **ANIMATO!** Film Poll first place winners), Jones is a living legend who is still active in creating new animation with many of the classic Warner Brothers characters.

2. Tex Avery
3. Friz Freleng
4. Bob Clampett
5. Bill Hanna / Joe Barbera
6. Max Fleischer / Dave Fleischer
7. Walter Lantz
8. Rod Scribner
9. Don Bluth
10. Ub Iwerks
11. Winsor McCay
12. Vladimir Tytla
13. Frank Tashlin
14. Ralph Bakshi
15. Shamus Culhane
16. Bob McKimson
17. Walt Disney
18. Jay Ward
19. Hugh Harman / Rudolph Ising



20. Otto Messmer
21. Bill Plympton
22. John Kricfalusi
23. Art Babbitt
24. Grim Natwick
25. Dave Tendlar
26. Norman McLaren
27. Bob Cannon
28. Bob Godfrey
29. Paul Driessen

30. Glen Keane
31. Marv Newland
32. Nick Park
33. Ward Kimball
34. Will Vinton
35. Myron Waldman
36. Ollie Johnston
37. Bill Melendez
38. Bruno Bozetto
39. Dick Lundy
40. Norm McCabe

THEATRICAL SHORTS

1. Duck Amuck

Obviously many animations fans consider this short to be the best one-reel cartoon Chuck Jones ever directed. Certainly other Jones cartoons have their supporters, but this sly surrealistic trip through the mind of a sadistic animator and his unwitting victim is constantly inventive, horrifying and hilarious.

2. Coal Black and De Sebben Dwarfs
3. What's Opera, Doc?
4. Little Rural Riding Hood
5. The Band Concert
6. Snow White
7. Duck Dodgers in the 24 1/2th Century
8. Popeye the Sailor Meets Sinbad the Sailor
9. King Size Canary
10. Gertie the Dinosaur
11. Porky in Wackyland
12. Bad Luck Blackie
13. The Great Piggy Bank Robbery
14. Red Hot Riding Hood
15. Gerald McBoing Boing
16. Steamboat Willie

17. The Old Mill
18. Superman
19. One Froggy Evening
20. Minnie the Moocher
21. Rabbit of Seville
22. Bimbo's Initiation
23. Der Fuhrer's Face
24. Clock Cleaners
25. Lucky Ducky
26. The Skeleton Dance
27. Rabbit Seasoning
28. The Three Little Pigs
29. Duck! Rabbit, Duck!
30. The Sinking of the Lusitania
31. Book Revue
32. Cat Concerto
33. Roller Coaster Rabbit
34. Knighty Knight Bugs
35. A Wild Hare
36. Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips
37. Peace on Earth
38. Tin Pan Alley Cats
39. Tummy Trouble
40. The Prince and the Pauper



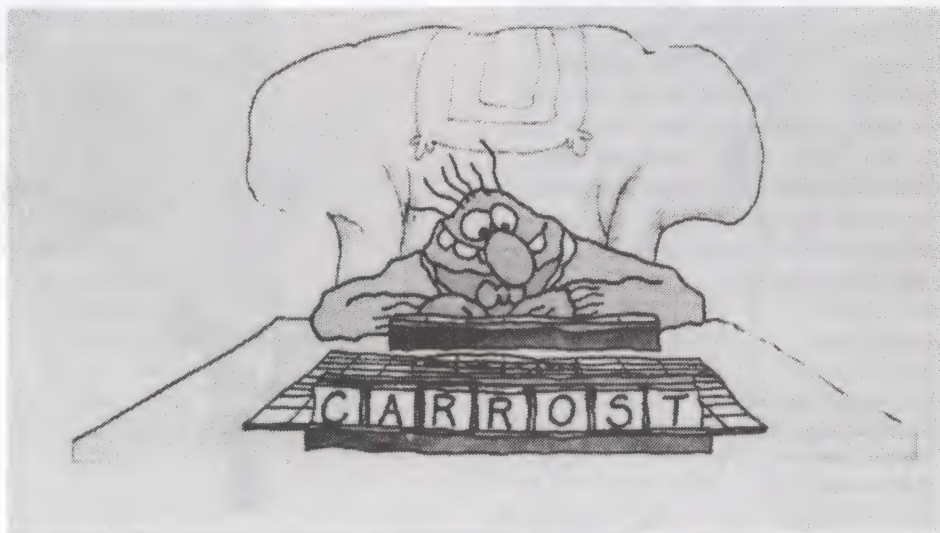
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INDEPENDENT SHORTS

1. The Big Snit

Canadian animator Richard Condie's Academy Award-nominated short about Scrabble, love and nuclear war, is a very odd, very funny, and, ultimately, poignant film. If you haven't seen it, check out the *Incredible Manitoba Animation* videotape, and one of Condie's other acclaimed films, *Getting Started*.

2. The Cat Came Back
3. Creature Comforts
4. Bambi Meets Godzilla
5. The Man Who Planted Trees
6. The Wrong Trousers
7. Charade
8. Technological Threat
9. Quasi at the Quackadero
10. Special Delivery
11. 25 Ways to Stop Smoking
12. Mona Lisa Descending a Stair Case
13. Your Face
14. Pas a Deux
15. Crac
16. The Great Cognito
17. Cat and Mouse
18. Snowman
19. Blackfly
20. Lupo the Butcher



21. How to Kiss
22. Jumping
23. Seaside Woman
24. Tin Toy
25. KnickKnack
26. The Tale of Tales
27. Satiemania
28. The Street
29. Ode to G. I. Joe
30. Neighbors
31. Closed Mondays
32. Luxo Jr.
33. Thank You Masked Man
34. The Hand
35. Mindscape
36. One of Those Days
37. Plymptoons
38. The Sweater
39. The Frog, the Dog and the Devil
40. Little Wolf

TV SERIES

1. The Simpsons

In many ways, this show (along with the theatrical success of Disney's *The Little Mermaid*) created the current animation revival. *The Simpsons* made watching cartoons once again an acceptable activity for adults!

2. The Bullwinkle Show
3. Ren & Stimpy
4. The Flintstones
5. Animaniacs
6. TaleSpin
7. Tiny Toon Adventures
8. Mighty Mouse: The New Adventures
9. The Jetsons
10. Duck Tales
11. Batman: The Animated Series
12. Darkwing Duck
13. Jonny Quest
14. Rocko's Modern Life
15. George of the Jungle
16. Huckleberry Hound
17. Garfield

18. Yogi Bear
19. Beavis and Butt-Head
20. The Tick
21. Duckman
22. The Critic
23. Taz-Mania
24. The Beatles
25. Chip 'n Dale Rescue Rangers
26. Beany and Cecil
27. Hoppity Hooper
28. The Alvin Show
29. Dargemouse
30. Colonel Bleep
31. Crusader Rabbit
32. Tom Terrific
33. Kimba the White Lion
34. Liquid Television
35. Bobby's World
36. Gumby
37. Scooby Doo
38. Fat Albert & the Cosby Kids
39. Milton the Monster
40. Top Cat



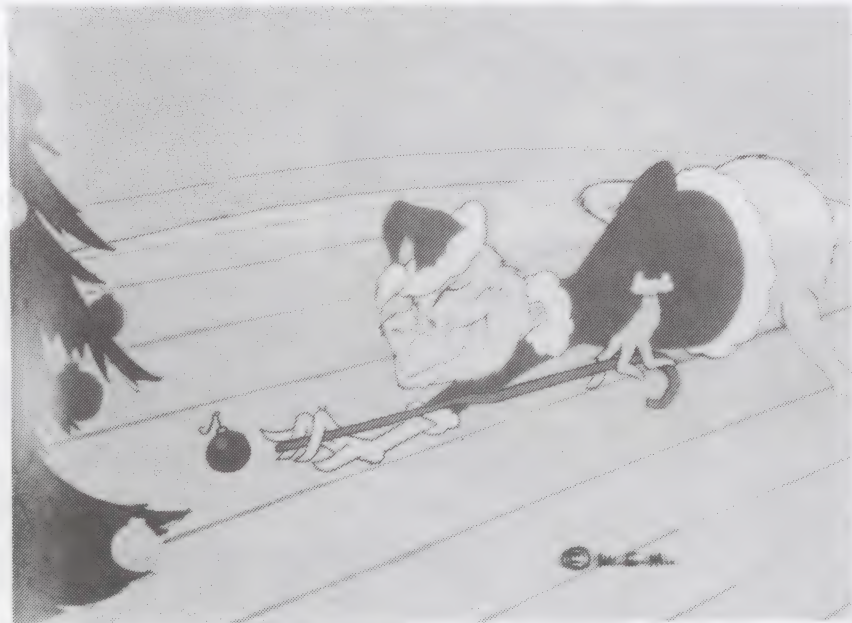
© 20th Century Fox Film Corp.

TV SPECIALS

1. How the Grinch Stole Christmas

The works of children's author Dr. Seuss have often been adapted into animation, but seldom have the results been so satisfying as this half-hour film directed by Chuck Jones and narrated by Boris Karloff.

2. A Charlie Brown Christmas
3. Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer
4. It's the Great Pumkin, Charlie Brown
5. A Christmas Carol
6. Mr. Magoo's Christmas Carol
7. Will Vinton's Claymation House of Horrors
8. Santa Claus is Coming to Town
9. A Wish For Wings That Work
10. Horton Hears a Who
11. The Snowman
12. The Hobbit
13. The Lorax
14. Frosty the Snowman
15. The Simpsons Christmas Special
16. It's a Wonderful Tiny Toons Christmas
17. Tales From the Dark Side
18. Tattertown
19. Rikki Tikki Tavi
20. A Claymation Christmas
21. A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving
22. Family Dog
23. Sport Goofy in Soccermania
24. A Doonesbury Special



© M.G.M.

25. Tiny Toons Spring Break Festival
26. Twas the Night Before Christmas
27. Banjo the Woodpile Cat
28. A Cosmic Christmas
29. Rocko's Modern Christmas
30. A Soldier's Tale
31. Cartoon Lost & Found
32. Kotec the White Seal
33. Pink Christmas

34. The 12 Days of Christmas
35. Whale of a Tale
36. Garfield's Halloween
37. A Pogo Special Birthday Special
38. California Raisins: Meet the Raisins
39. Down and Out With Donald Duck
40. Ducktales: Treasure of the Golden Suns

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アニメ

ANIMATO! ANIME GUIDE

by John Beam, Pete Fitzgerald, Patrick Duquette, Andrew Osmond, Celina Brooks, and G. Michael Dobbs.

Farewell To Space Battleship Yamato: In The Name Of Love

Voyager Entertainment, Inc.
subtitled; 118 Minutes

Star Blazer fans will love this video, hands down, no questions asked. But, beyond people who grew up with the *Star Blazers*, who will sit through this cliché-ridden space opera? I screened this epic three times, and squirmed each time with mixed emotions.

I tried to like this video. After all, it has plenty of appealing elements; a legendary space craft with a cool design, a heroic crew, an evil empire bent on conquering the known universe, young lovers caught up in a galactic war. What more could an animation space-junkie want?

Farewell To Space Battleship Yamato suffers from a "Saturday Morning" animation look and a dated appearance. The Elvis-inspired bell-bottomed uniforms leave little doubt when this epic was hatched. The video box says 1994, but everything else screams '70's. *Yamato* does have an innocence about it that is sorely missed in today's gritty, show-the-blood style of animation. However, the virtues don't outweigh the vices.

This video is marketed as a full-length feature. I purposely avoided researching *Star Blazers* and *Yamato* to see if the "movie" could stand alone as entertainment. I wanted to see if a person unfamiliar with the *Yamato* saga could enjoy the video. Unfortunately, like a soap opera, much depends on your knowing the characters' pasts. Speaking of characters, the least appealing is vapid Nova, Derek Wildstar's betrothed. With triangular heads, tiny mouths, and suffering from sleepy-eye, all three female characters (heroine, goddess and villainess) resemble each other. Derek looks like a starched and stretched Dudley Moore. Hard to take him seriously.

This dubbed version has a few hilarious translations, some with clichés. Here's one of my favorites: Nova is rushed to sick bay after being shot. Derek asks Nova how she is doing. Nova: "Oh, just fine. He's (Dr. Sane) a real Doctor Feelgood." Dr. Sane: "Guess it's true. Besides, it's only a flesh wound." Derek: "You weren't hit in a vital organ?" Nova: "No. I'll be..(cough, cough) ..all right."

The opening sequence contains a most illogical scene which attempts to show just how cruel the Evil Empire of the White Comet really is. Six huge machines are monitoring four scrawny slaves and zapping those that falter. Not exactly an efficient use of resources. I know it's only a cartoon, but stuff like this bugs me.

Animation of the numerous battle scenes and space travel were good. Some looping and static shots, but overall pretty slick. Every animation trick in the book is used in the course of the film. The limited budget shows in the character animation. I'm assuming a limited budget here. I'd hate to think they spent millions for stiff animation. Tense or dramatic scenes were rendered with trickles of sweat on foreheads. Problem is, the trickles never trickled. No movement whatsoever. Maybe I'm being too picky, but this is a glaring cheap-out for me.

My favorite thing in the film is the *Yamato* itself. Kind of like a space ship designed by fevered 12-year-olds with access to various scale model kits. Just the vehicle to warp into another dimension with your dead lover as deceased comrades float by in ghostly parade formation.



Space Battleship Yamato blasts off. (© Voyager Entertainment, Inc.)

If you're not familiar with the *Yamato* canon, you should be aware the *Star Blazers* are *Yamato* (a.k.a. *Argo*) sequences with different character names for American television.

Finally, the title is misleading. Not only is this not a farewell to *Yamato*, a new series was spawned with a new permutation of the ship and crew. Even as I write this, a new version of *Space Battleship Yamato* is on its way to America.

Legions of *Star Blazer* fans will disagree, but I can't recommend this film. Too bad, because the potential was there. Patrick Duquette

Project A-ko Original Soundtrack
U.S. Manga Corps Mangamusic
USM 1138

12 tracks: 43.54 minutes

When U.S. Manga Corps released *Project A-ko* two years ago, I doubt that even they knew how popular it would become. No doubt this popularity is what has prompted them to release other "A-ko"-related products (i.e. a role-playing game, a CD-ROM screen saver, a comic book, tee shirts, posters, and a completed set of *Project A-ko* Original Video Animations).

The *Project A-ko* Original Soundtrack is another such product put out to satisfy the "A-ko" fan's appetite. There probably isn't another anime soundtrack or background music track like this one in existence. This is due to the fact that it was created by Americans, and was recorded in Hollywood, California. *Flashdance* composer Richie Zito and *Star Search* music director Joey Carbone have collaborated to make an oft-enjoyable piece of techno-pop tones (not at all bad for mid-eighties-period music).

Tracks I personally enjoyed were 1. "Morning Light Type A," 2. "Dance Away," 3. "Spaceship in The Dark," 4. "Follow Your Dream," 7. "Explosion" (the BEST track in my opinion), 9. "Max 5000" 10. "Jealous Eyes," and 11. "Morning Light Type C." If I have any beefs about this soundtrack they concern partly the inclusion of instrumentals for "Follow Your Dream" and "Dance Away" (Tracks 8 and 12) which seem to exist only for filler material. Also, I believe the tracks could have been sequenced better (such as the way they were sequenced in the film).

I cannot comment on how this soundtrack compares to other such anime products, since this is the only anime music I have ever come across. However, from what I have read, this is one of the best CD's of it's kind. Not many anime soundtracks are available domestically, but I'm hoping that sales of this one will prompt U.S. companies to acquire and release other music titles, such as the *Bubblegum Crisis* series and *Urusei Yatsura Music File*. **John Beam**

Project A-ko 2:
Plot of the Daitokuji Financial Group
U.S. Manga Corps
usm 1102
70 minutes

This bit of anime fun was the first of many "A-ko" products which USMC released in 1994 for its self-proclaimed "Year of A-ko." The same people who brought us *Project A-ko* give us much of the same in this Original Video Animation, which is first in a series of five OVA's. [Editor's note: an OVA is a made-for-video production.] Although *Project A-ko 2* is not nearly as balanced and well-produced overall as *Project A-ko*, it stands well enough on its own as a launching point for the rest of the

series.

The story takes place a mere three weeks after the events in *Project A-ko*. The aliens have retained possession of their spaceship, and have converted it into a shopping mall/cultural center, in an attempt to receive the needed funds to repair their ship. Meanwhile, B-ko continues her plans to destroy A-ko, so she can win C-ko (if I have lost some of you here, you really need to watch *Project A-ko 1*). However, we also find out that B-ko's weirdness is hereditary. Her father has a fanatical desire to acquire the alien's spaceship for his own purposes, and proposes to use C-ko (the aliens' princess) as a hostage to this end. He will also go so far as to steal his own daughter's robot designs, which he feels will enable him to capture this craft.

A-ko, as usual, is not intentionally involved in any of this. These strange circumstances simply fall upon her, and she deals with them the only way she can. For those of you who do not know, A-ko is the product of a union with Superman and Wonder Woman; therefore, she is also bestowed with unusual strength and abilities. If she encounters a problem, she meets it with brute strength and kung fu-type fighting style. Her techniques in problem-solving do not always work out, but this is part of the fun. C-ko, as usual, acts cute, cries uncontrollably at times, and prepares the worst-tasting meals ever conceived. She is strangely the hub in which the wheel of this series revolves around.

The fun does not conclude with the end of the film. What follows is: a "phantom out-take" from *Project A-ko*, a film trailer for *Project A-ko 2*, a film digest for *Project A-ko 2* (which concludes with the characters beating up the director, Yuji Moriyama for not providing more), and a dumb music video.

Not much is lost in this sequel from the original film. The animation is very good, and similar outstanding layouts are presented. There are a few differences, though, and these differences are a little bothersome. The character designs are altered a bit, and the story is more totally zany-madcap in its tone

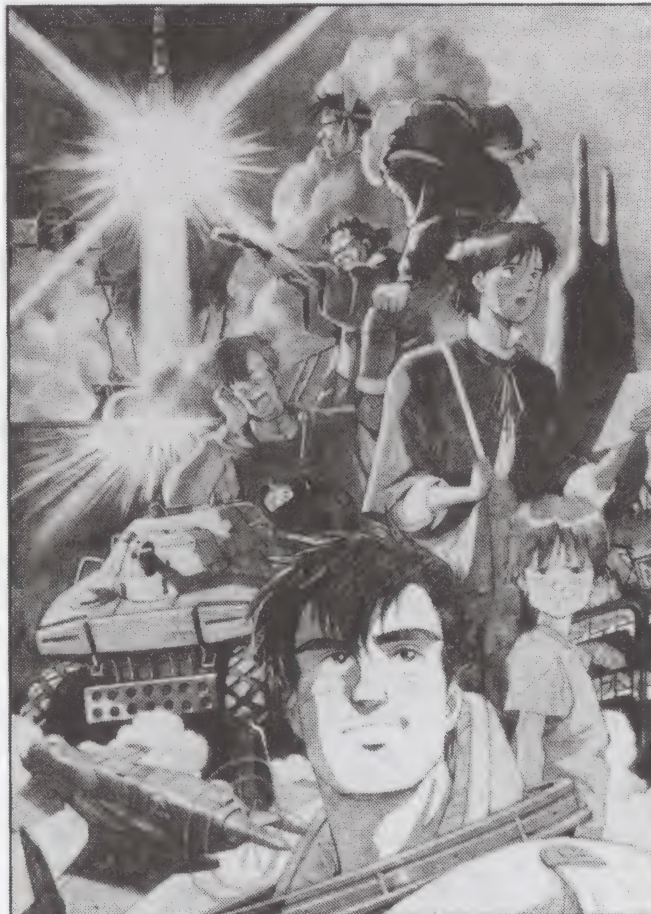
than the original. I also think that the quality of the voice characterizations in the subtitled version fall off a little, even though the same actors are used. However, the English-dubbed version of *Project A-ko 2* is a marked improvement over the English dubbing for *Project A-ko*.

So, if you like science fiction, zany slapstick humor, and explosives, all rolled into one, this video is for you. However, you may wish to view the first film in order to pick up on character motivations and their foibles. **John Beam**

The Wings of Honneamis - Royal Space Force
Manga Entertainment
dubbed; 127 minutes

When I first became aware of anime as something completely different from the American-made genre about two years ago, I was still under the impression that anything concerning "space" had to have giant robots and aliens engaged in overthrowing Earth. *The Wings of Honneamis* does not thoroughly dash these impressions; however, it gives a much different view of space and science fiction.

The reason my impressions aren't dashed is because I had not in my animation experience EVER seen a film like this one, be it Japanese or not. Had not the writer/director Hiroyuki



The cast of *The Wings of Honneamis* (© Manga Entertainment, Inc.)

Yamaga been involved in animation in the first place, this could have easily been a live-action production (albeit a VERY expensive production). Its story concerns the development of a space program in an alternate reality, and the decisions this planet's first astronaut must make in order to become a man of destiny.

My first exposure to *Wings of Honneamis* made such an impression on me, I was stunned. The final twenty or so minutes of the climax and resolution moved me very much, in spite of the fact that the version I saw was entirely untranslated. No film before or since has affected me like this film did that night.

The remarkable designs in *Wings of Honneamis* show how much absolute detail and care went into this film. Simple items such as books, spoons, furniture, telephones display a wonderful flair for originality and creativity. Yoshiyuki Sadamoto's character designs are simply the most original I have seen in a film of this sort in a long time. Indeed, much of the visual beauty and originality of *Honneamis* is due to the talent of the then-24 year old Sadamoto.

It must be pointed out that this is definitely not your "Mice, Rabbits, and Ducks" sort of animated film. As I have stated earlier, *Honneamis* could have surely been filmed live. However, it also quashes the notion that "if it can be filmed live, it shouldn't be animated." It is a straight drama, containing some of the most beautiful scenes and layouts ever produced in animation.

I do not think audiences will be turned off because *The Wings of Honneamis* does not deal with magic, song-and-dance, or "typical" anime topics. As expertly as this film was executed, I cannot see how anyone would not be highly impressed. Park your pre-conceived notions about what an animated feature should be like at the door, and admire this film. You will never look at animation the same way again. **John Beam**

The Dagger of Kamui

Animeigo #AT093-008

subtitled 132 minutes

With my experience of watching Japanese anime being somewhat limited, I have tended to gravitate toward the wonderful, flipped-out high school comedies, such as *Urusei Yatsura*, *Ranma 1/2*, and *Project A-ko*. Many (though not all) of the more serious space opera and robot-suit adventures have left me a bit cold; but now I have had the pleasure of watching *The Dagger of Kamui*, an epic, historical fantasy-adventure that, for me, is a refreshing change of pace from the usual cyberpunk material.

The show plays much like the result of putting a typical samurai picture, a spaghetti western, and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* in a blender and pressing "liquify." Directed by Rin Taroo,

the film takes place in mid-Nineteenth century Japan, when the shogunate were desperate to regain their former dominance of the island nation from those eager to form a more modern Japanese government. Jiro, a fugitive orphan, is forced to uncover his mysterious past when he is framed for killing both his foster mother and sister, his biological mother, and is later tricked into killing his father. . . And you thought YOU had troubles! He soon finds that he is but a pawn in a plot by hulking Buddhist monk Tenkai (who looks like a cross between Marlon Brando and Arnold Schwarzenegger!) to locate a vast, legendary hidden treasure, which the shogunate can use to topple their enemies and rule Japan once again. This leads to a game of cat-and-mouse that stretches from Japan to Alaska, Nevada, California's Catalina Island, and back to Japan. Along the way, Jiro encounters lethal star-throwing ninjas, a fellow orphan boy, a female assassin, a black American slave, a clippership captain, an old wise dwarf, a lovely American Indian girl with a secret, rowdy gunslingers, and a young, serious Mark Twain!

I found *Dagger of Kamui* to be a thrilling animated action film filled with twists and turns that I could not anticipate beforehand. Several characters are not who they seem to be and a few scenes are a bit confusing initially, such as the first appearance of the female assassin and a standout sequence featuring three mystical killers-for-hire. It is also a visually striking picture, with characters drawn a bit more realistically than the common "big eye" type and the action scenes done in a very atmospheric and stylized manner. In fact, if it wasn't for the stylization of the violence, it would come across as a far gorier film than it is. During the many swordfights, sprays of blood are not merely red, but glowing, incandescent displays of liquid fireworks. Still, pretty strong stuff that isn't suitable for small children. Another strong bit involves a well-animated and scary hallucination sequence seen thru Jiro's eyes as he is drugged in his mother's hut. If you like comedic touches to break up the tension, you'll find none in this film, but that's o.k. by me, since variety is the spice of life. On a less grim note, the background work is quite beautifully done, especially in the dark Japanese forests and most spectacularly in the snowy mountains of Alaska. Towards the end of the film, there are some brief but magnificent shoreline naval battle scenes.

The tape is in stereo, which is effective enough, though due to its vintage, it wouldn't beat, say, *Aladdin* in a soundtrack contest. Having read all this, you're probably thinking, "Hey Pete, you still haven't told me about the dagger mentioned in the title and what the blue blazes it has to do with any of this other stuff!" To find out the answer to that \$64,000 question, you'll have to watch and find out for yourself! **Pete Fitzgerald**

Dominion - Tank Police Act 1

U.S. Manga Corps

USM 1037

dubbed; 40 minutes

This tale, originally crafted by popular manga (comic book) artist Masamune Shirow, is one of the most popular titles that has made it's way to our shores (still available through Dark Horse Comics/Studio Proteus in a graphic novel format). So, it wasn't surprising that U.S. Manga Corps wanted to release the anime version, its first anime release in 1991. This release has been very successful, and launched U.S.M.C. as a leading producer of professionally English-translated Japanese animation.

The story takes us back before the events in the manga version, when the heroine, Leona Ozaki is just being transferred to the Tank Police, their first female member. The Tank Police have one function, to keep New Port City's crime rate of one every 36 seconds from growing to one every 35 seconds. Unfortunately, the Tank Police cause more destruction than the criminals.

Meanwhile, the half-cyborg Buaku and his bio-engineered "cat sisters" Annapuna and Unipuma are causing havoc at the "Hospital for The Perfectly Healthy." They have been hired to steal urine from "patients" of this hospital, and their methods are less than discreet. They even manage to wipe out a squad of S.W.A.T. who surround them (after Anna and Uni distract them with a strip-tease). Rookies Leona and partner Alu attempt to stop this crime, but they disobey orders from "Mr. Squad Commander" Britain, whose "Sweetheart Tank-Special" is wrecked in the process. This episode ends with Britain threatening to demote Leona to the Child Welfare Department.

This video is hilarious, yet it also voices environmental concerns. The reason there is a "hospital for Healthy People" is because of a bacteria cloud which shrouds the Earth, and the only people who are truly healthy are mutations who have no bacteria in their bodies. These people are used by the government in bio-engineering experiments.

I thought this animation was handled exceptionally well, especially the chase sequence between Leona and Buaku's gang. The music is pretty good too, particularly a selection entitled "Tanky Boys/Tanky Girls." If there is a problem with this production, it involves the soundtrack. Apparently, U.S.M.C. made a few changes, and their manipulations have angered "purists." However, since I have not seen the original version, I cannot comment further on this controversy.

This particular series is in four acts, but act two concludes the events in act one. Acts three and four tell another story, altogether. Another *Dominion* series has just been released in Japan, and hopefully these episodes will make their

way here soon. **John Beam**

Fight!! Iczer-1, Vol. 1, Acts 1 & 11

U.S. Renditions
Cat. #USR-VD13
dubbed; 60 min.

In my search for the very best anime titles, *Iczer-1* was one which kept cropping up. It was listed in an article in *Animenominous!* #5, entitled "Video Recommendations for the Absolute Beginner," and in the latest The Right Stuff International catalog as a highly recommended title. I felt that these approving sources would warrant my purchasing this OVA.

There are some positive things to say concerning this anime (what I have seen of it. I have yet to see the finale in Act 111). Toshihiro Hirano's character designs and overall direction is masterful. The story is interesting, albeit somewhat gory and horrific. The animation is very good. The music is a bit dated, but passable. Some of the mecha designs are also pretty dated (some of the weaponry looks like it was taken straight from the 1964 version of *Godzilla vs. Mothra*).

The problem with this U.S. Renditions production of the original Kubo Shoten/A.I.C. production is their voice track. This is supposed to be a very serious, and dramatic tale concerning the Earth's fate at the hands of other-dimensional alien beings (the Cthuwulf), with humankind's future placed in the hands of a bio-engineered rebel named Iczer 1, and her human partner, Nagisa. The problem stems from the fact that the people chosen to dub this video are completely devoid of feeling and emotion. I found myself laughing at scenes which were not supposed to be funny, simply because of the ineptness of the voice actors. I can only imagine that the original Japanese voice characterizations were much better, and more appropriate than this English version.

This raises a relevant question: why does U.S. Renditions only subtitle some of their anime (like *Gunbuster*), with the rest of their titles only English-dubbed? The video box states that the translation is true to the original production, but that matters little when the performance of the voice actors isn't. Maybe someone out there can explain this curious company policy to me. **John Beam**

Appleseed

Manga Entertainment
67 minutes; dubbed

Appleseed is a fast-moving science fiction adventure involving some interesting ethical problems in a "perfect" city of the future.

Olympus is a community born out of the ashes of a final World War. Run by a massive computer, there is little strife or unemployment. Although populated by human survivors, many



The heroes of *Appleseed* (© Manga Entertainment, Inc.)

of the city's residents are humans artificially created and programmed to thrive in the closed and controlled environment of the city. There is an underground movement that opposes the control of the city's government and the further creation of these programmed people, and it is the story of the two police officers who lead the fight against the terrorist war waged by the underground which dominates the action of the production.

The film's main flaw is the script never really resolves any of the city's problems it presents. There are actually some very good ideas here which are not developed. Themes concerning racism, and the trade-off between a clean and orderly society versus personal freedom (were the writers thinking about Singapore?), for example are raised, but are sacrificed for action sequences.

The animation is well-done, the dubbing job is satisfactory, and overall *Appleseed* is indeed much better than many other Japanese productions I've watched. **GMD**

Graveyard of the Fireflies

Central Park Media
CPM 1053

Subtitled; 88 minutes

"September 21st 1945. That was the night I died."

The Second World War is over. An emaciated boy lies dying on subway platform somewhere in Japan, lost and forgotten. As the station attendants dispose of his body, his spirit

appears to tell his life-story. This is no fairy-tale, and it has no happy ending.

Graveyard of the Fireflies is a film few people will enjoy, or watch more than once. Nevertheless, it can move audiences in a way no "safe" entertainment can. Like the recent "Schindler's List," it deals with an intensely painful subject most would rather forget: the sufferings of innocents in war. Also like *Schindler's List*, it offers no glib answers or slogans: its job is to educate, not spoon-feed. Unlike *Schindler*, however, it focuses not on the suffering of millions but on the sufferings of two: a Japanese boy and girl struggling to survive the perils of wartime.

Little Setsuko and big brother Seito barely survive the air-raid that destroys their town: their mother does not. Burdened with keeping himself and his sister alive, Seito seeks help from a distant, unloving aunt, who chastises them and makes their

lives a misery. Seito and Setsuko then decide to fend for themselves, making an abandoned shelter their home, harried by air-raids and unsympathetic neighbors. Throughout the film, Seito encourages and sustains his sister, assuring her that they can pull through and that the nightmare will end someday. We, on the other hand, already know the outcome, giving their hopes and dreams an underlying bitterness. In many ways this is not a sad film; it celebrates the joys of life, enriched in the face of adversity, and the close bonds between protector and protected. Nevertheless, I guarantee there will not be a dry eye in the audience when the end credits go up.

Takahata Isao was a longtime partner of Miyazaki and it shows: the vivid photographic drawings, the slow, careful narrative, and the use of imagery, in this case the fireflies Seito catches for Setsuko which become metaphors for the helpless victims of war. In one startling scene, Seito is looking at the fireflies when he has a vision of his childhood visit to a naval review: the battlecruisers are reduced to dotted patterns of light and shadow, highlighted by floodlights and fireworks, their idealization - in stark contrast to the otherwise relentlessly realist animation.

Miyazaki's style is also echoed in the strong boy-girl pairing at the film's center (the siblings are strikingly close to those in Miyazaki's *My Neighbor Totoro*), with Seito taking on simultaneous roles of parent and best friend to Setsuko. Setsuko herself ages rapidly through



Grave Of The Fireflies © 1988

Akiyuki Nosaka/Shinchosa

the course of the film. At the outset she is shown screaming for her dead mother, but later on she blithely chats to Seito about details of the burial. In contrast to the deliberately stolid Seito, Setsuko fast becomes the main commentator for the film, a natural source of platitudes like "Why do fireflies die so soon?" and a worthy focus of Takahata's gentle rage. (Nosaka Akuyuki, on whose award-winning novel this film is based, lost his own two-year old sister to malnutrition during World War Two.)

The children's situation is highlighted by Takahata's graceful use of flashback: their wartime experiences are juxtaposed with pictures from their former family life, melding with the narrative rather than disrupting it. Underlying all is a fine, unobtrusive, score by Michio Mamiya, which proves almost as heartbreaking as the subject-matter.

One interesting issue is whether this film, with its almost complete absence of fantasy trappings, could have been made just as well in live-action. Putting budget considerations to one side (along with the challenge of finding sufficiently talented young actors), I'm inclined to say 'no'. "Tombstone for Fireflies" derives much of its power from stark, purified, images, such as the featureless playground in which Seito tells Setsuko she cannot see her mother, or the uncluttered country landscapes in which much of the film takes place. Such pictures need an animator's hand to remove distractions and irrelevancies: the real world just isn't perfect enough. In the end, this is the first anime import to the West to justify the title of genuinely "adult" animation. And, equally important, it gives new meaning to the phrase "animation art." Andrew Osmond

MACROSS PLUS

Episode One

MANGA ENTERTAINMENT

40 Minutes (\$14.95)

Release Date: February 28, 1995

What I found most appealing about *Macross Plus* was the animation. The plot and characters were of interest and the episode sets up mysteries about the characters backgrounds to be revealed later, but the visuals of the episode are what kept me fascinated.

The story takes place in 2040 on a planet called Eden. It revolves around three major characters, Isamu, a very skilled, hotshot pilot, Myung, a producer for a popular singer and Guld, another test pilot and Isamu's rival. The opening scenes during the title song establish their early friendship. As the story evolves it is obvious that something happened to drastically change that relationship. The events that caused this are hinted at only. The three characters meet again when Isamu is transferred to Eden as a test pilot. Guld is already there testing another fighter and Myung's singer, Sharon Apple, is giving a concert there.

I found it very difficult to sympathize with the two major male characters. Isamu is the first character introduced and it is his presence that causes all the tension. He is arrogant, selfish, somewhat lazy, rebellious, unsympathetic and has a major attitude problem. It is almost impossible for the audience to hope that he can come through and get his job done. Guld, on the other hand, is reserved, controlled, respected and every inch an officer until Isamu arrives. The audience can't decide who the hero and villains are. It makes it difficult to relate to either of the two characters.

Myung is the only one that we can feel for. She is caught between Isamu and Guld whom she has known since her youth. She has given up a dream to do something different. She is also very well known but very lonely.

One of the problems with this first episode is it didn't leave with the feeling of wanting more. Without being able to relate to any of the characters it is hard to care what happens to them. I'm curious to see where the story leads but not overanxious.

The entire look of *Macross Plus* was incredibly well done. The attention given to the smallest details was fascinating to discover. The reflections of buildings on windows, reflections of crowds and sky. The heat generated by a fighter engine on the desert was given as much care as the main characters. Just as much

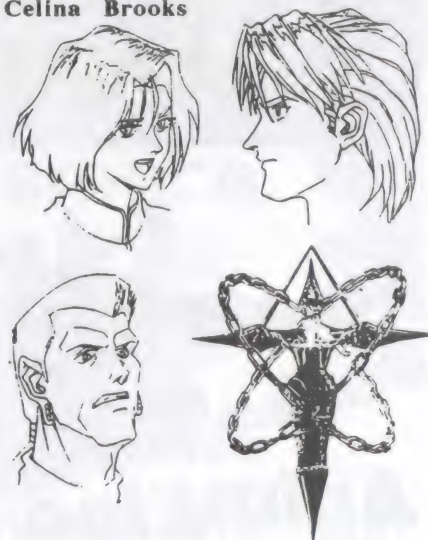
attention was given to the backgrounds. It gave a life to the movie not normally found in animation. The people in the background were individuals not a group. The actions taking place behind the characters were totally unrelated to the main action, ships moving across a sea, windmills turning, birds flying. All this gives the movie a feeling that the characters are there, existing in a world that moves on in spite of them.

One of the effects that I especially liked was the use of focused foreground and backgrounds. Similar to a movie camera, in many scenes either the characters in the foreground were sharp and clear and the background was blurry or vice versa. Another were the use of computer effects. They were well incorporated into the film. So well it is very hard to distinguish what is and is not a computer generated effect. One effect that had problems, however, was the acrobatics of the fighters. For the most part these scenes were smooth and flowing, with unusual views and great action, and because of that fact the scenes that did not flow well jumped out at you.

Another problem was the darkness. The style that is used is similar to the art found in extensive use of lines, the use of large, structured areas of color and black and the more angular look of the hair and clothes is reminiscent of comic book art. This use of the large areas of dark spaces in the figures and backgrounds often made it hard to distinguish between the background and foreground. The high contrast of the very white areas didn't help this matter.

I recommend this episode for the animation alone. I enjoyed watching this episode the same way I enjoy viewing a piece of art. Each time you may see some interesting details you didn't see before.

Celina Brooks



Images © 1995 Macross Plus Production

Clockwise, Upper Right: Dyson, Sharon Apple, Bowmann, Myung.



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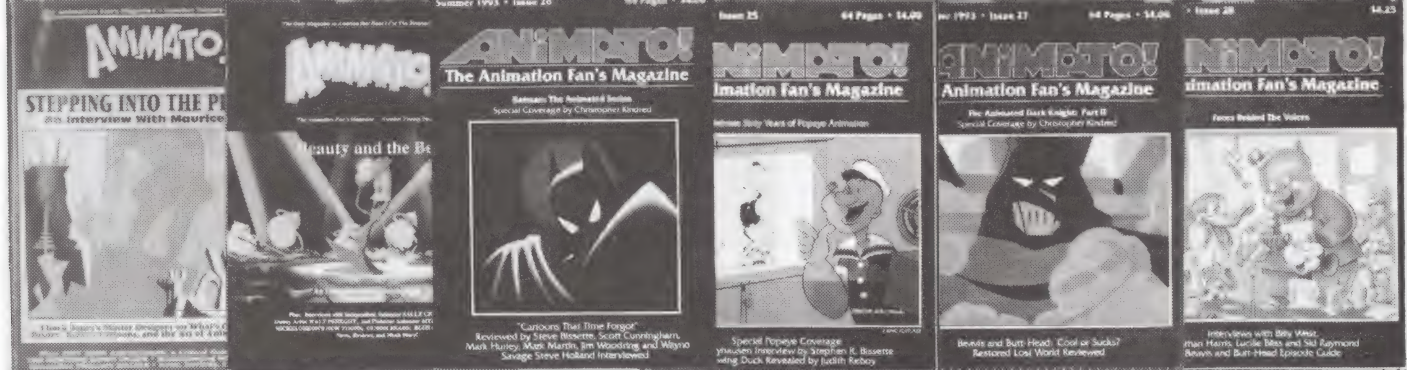
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TOON NEWS

From Page 9

the Cat with Savage Steve Holland, is handling the writing and producer chores, while DeGrandis, who was director on the "Robocat" sequence of the feature film *Stay Tuned*, is directing and co-producing.

Along with the stars of the show, a spoiled house cat and a "dog's dog," the team have also created two other series for the half hour; *Tex Tinstar: The Best in the West*, and *Pith Possum: Super Dynamic Possum of Tomorrow*.

Up-Coming Video Releases

Disney Home Video has announced the following video releases:

Gargoyles, The Movie will hit the stores in February with a suggested retail price of \$19.99 and will include an "interactive vcr game." Currently, *Gargoyles* is part of the Friday Disney Afternoon line-up.

The Lion King will be released in March with a price of \$26.99. There will also be a special boxed edition of the film complete with lithographs, a "making of" video and "an authentic bark paper calligraphy featuring the lyrics form 'Circle of Life' and 'Lion King' design elements." The boxed set will retail for \$79.99.

Warner Brothers Home Video will release *A Troll in Central Park* in January with a price of \$19.99.

Sony Wonder's Nickelodeon Collection will

debut the first two *Rocko's Modern Life* collections in February with a price tag of \$12.98. *Rocko's Modern Life: With Friends Like These* will feature *Bedfellows*, *The Good*, *The Bad and the Wallaby*, and *No Pain, No Gain*, while *Rocko's Modern Life: Machine Madness* has the classic *Suck-O-matic*, *Unbalanced Load* and *Trash-O-Madness*. The second also includes a new cartoon entitled *How to Tell if Your Dog is Brainless*.

Sony Wonder is also releasing two tapes from the series *The Adventures of Tintin. The Secret of the Unicorns* and *Cigars of the Pharaohs* will be in stores in February and will cost \$12.98.

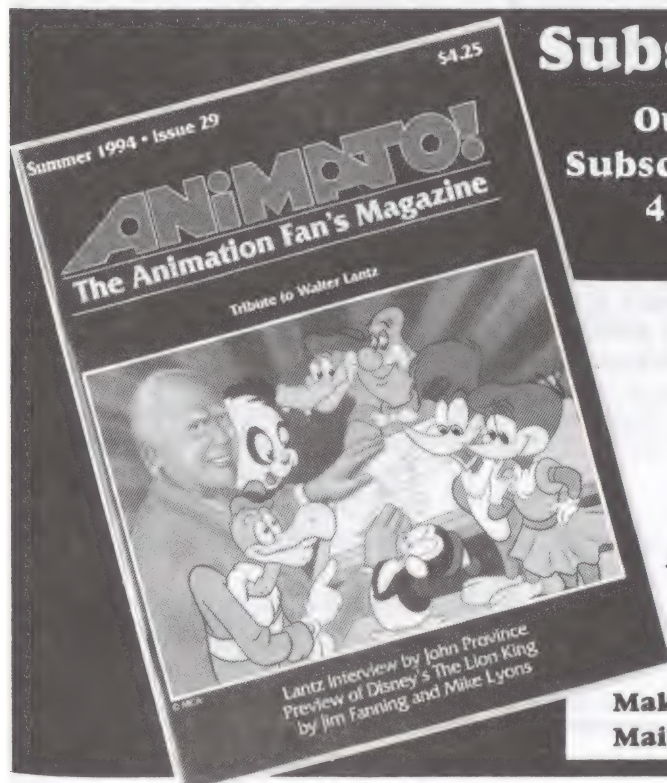
Streamline Pictures will release *Crying Freeman* #5 in January for \$29.95, and *8 Man After* #4 for \$14.95. *Robotech Perfect Collection: Macross* #6, *Robotech Perfect Collection: Southern Cross* #6, and *Robotech Perfect Collection: Mosepeada* #6 will also be

released in late January and will retail for \$19.95.

Streamline is also releasing the first of eight resin kits depicting characters from the film *Robot Carnival*. Prices for the model kits begin at \$79.95, while the company's Speed racer model kits begin at \$59.95.



Bill Kopp (top) and Jeff DeGrandis (left) are the creative force behind *Shnookums* and *Meat*.



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LETTERS

From Page 3

rotated according to availability. Individual episodes within the same *Rocky and Bullwinkle* adventure would be directed by different directors.

So would Kricfalusi and Dobbs say that Jay Ward cartoons are inferior because of the methods by which they were produced? [No, not me! GMD] Kricfalusi himself, back in *ANIMATO!* #16, said, "I hate being compared to *Rocky and Bullwinkle*. It's just a different style of humor...I think it's a compliment to me though...because what they really mean is it's one of the few funny TV shows." So, if Kricfalusi admits that Jay Ward cartoons are funny, does that invalidate his points?

I think Kricfalusi has conflated several separate issues. First is the primary of the writer. Second is the assembly line approach. Third is the low budget. And fourth is the control wielded by non-creative people (at networks and ad agencies).

On the first point, I think that Kricfalusi is simply wrong. Bill Scott, who hated the terms "gagman" and "storyman," insisted on the importance of the writer. "One of these days, people in animation are going to admit that writing is of prime importance. It's writers who go about inventing the worlds that never previously existed." ² He admitted that "not very many people can do it. It's a dreadful shock to live action writers to try and write animation." ³

Certainly many script-driven cartoons could be judged inferior examples of animation. But that doesn't mean that animation writers are bad. It just means, perhaps, that the writers of those cartoons were bad animation writers. Bill Scott, on the other hand, was a great animation writer. Joe Murray, producer of *Rocko's Modern Life*, concedes, "Early attempts at this process, such as Hanna-Barbera's *Flinstones* and Jay Ward's *Bullwinkle* cartoons, could support the limited animation through strong writing." ⁴

Scott's appraisal of his own artistic abilities was that "I can't draw worth a damn." ⁵ But he did have extensive animation experience, having begun as a cel-washer for the First Motion Picture Unit of the Army Air Forces and worked his way up as an inker, inbetweener, and assistant layout man before becoming a writer for Warner Brothers, UPA, Sutherland, and Jay Ward. Moreover, he had theatrical experience, having participated in community theatre and majored in drama at the University of Denver. (Disney director Rob Minkoff talks about the relation between theatre and animation in *ANIMATO!* #29).

I wouldn't hesitate to dub Bill Scott a genius,

but the truth is that I enjoy virtually all of the Jay Ward cartoons, which were the work of about a dozen writers. Although the budgets were low and the animation limited, the writers and animators had the benefit of sympathetic producers-Bill Scott himself and Jay Ward-and relatively little interference from the networks and agencies, primarily because they were running too close to deadline.

I have no objection to the term "illustrated radio" that is often applied to limited animation. After all, no one ever denies the validity of (unillustrated) radio as an artistic medium. If both radio and silent cartoons are legitimate media, surely there is considerable leeway in sound cartoons for the relative importance of the words and the pictures. Would Kricfalusi object to live drama on the grounds that the script precedes the staging?

I agree with Dobbs and Murray that good cartoons are typically creator-driven, rather than network-driven or sponsor-driven. But I would suggest that they may be either artist-driven or writer-driven. And I would hold up the Jay Ward cartoons of Bill Scott as examples of truly excellent writer-driven animation.

1. The one exception was Chris Jenkyns, a published illustrator, who did his own storyboards until Bill Scott told him not to bother.

2. From an interview conducted by Jim Korkis, September 3, 1982, published in part in *How to Create Animation* by John Cawley and Jim Korkis, Pioneer Books, 1990

3. From a lecture given to Dan McLaughlin's "Writing for Animation" class at the UCLA Animation Workshop, November, 1983, transcribed and edited by Phil Denslow, and published in *Animatrix* #3 (Fall 1986).

4. *ANIMATO!* #29 p. 35.

5. From the Jim Korkis interview.

Charles Ulrich is the editor of the *Frostbite Falls Far-Flung Flier*, which is currently publishing the remaining portions of Jim Korkis's interview with Bill Scott. Dr. Ulrich teaches linguistics at Pomona College. And for the record, I love Jay Ward's cartoons! GMD

On-Line

From Page 15

CompuServe or other vendors.

America Online; 8619 Westwood Center Dr.; Vienna, VA 22182. To sign up call (800) 827-6364. For general information call (703) 448-8700. The basic service fee is \$10/month plus \$3.50/hour with the first 5 hours per month free. America Online (AOL) can be accessed using graphical front-end software obtained from AOL.

Delphi; 1030 Massachusetts Ave.; Cambridge, MA 02138. To sign up call (800) 695-4005. For general information call (617) 491-3393. The basic service fee is \$13/month for 10 hours or \$23/month for 20 hours, with additional charges per hour after the basic hours are used each month.

If all you want is Internet access, there are many other options available. The magazine, NetGuide, and the book, *The Whole Internet*, identify many more Internet access providers.

Where to learn more?

One of the best books to learn more about the Internet is *The Whole Internet: User's Guide & Catalog*, 2nd ed, written by Ed Krol and published by O'Reilly & Associates, Inc. (ISBN 1-56592-063-5, published 1994).

There are also several magazines that can be found at most bookstores that provide information about on-line services. Some of the more popular magazines are *Online Access* and *NetGuide*.

If you are looking for a place where you can meet other animation fans or professionals, then think about getting on-line. While there can be a lot of "noise" on-line, there can also be a wealth of meaningful information and trivia if you are willing to dig for it. I hope to see you on the Internet sometime soon.




Michael Russell, from Orlando, FL, is a software developer with IBM and an animation fan. Michael is on-line and can be reached at "michael_russell@vnet.ibm.com"

FBI Files From Page 16

What the book doesn't contain are pages from the file that are almost totally blacked out (censored), pages that are similar to ones included in the book, and the scripts of the 4 films Disney made about the FBI for "The Mickey Mouse Club." The scripts take up almost 200 pages of the file and contain no information about Disney's life.

Trethewey's book does not include 2 letters Disney wrote to Hoover. The studio's lawyers denied him permission to reproduce them. One is a thank you note for an autographed copy of Hoover's book *Masters of Deceit*. Disney thanks Hoover for the book and then for his dedication to the FBI "and the fight which you are continually waging for the protection of our way of life." The second thanks Mr. Hoover for congratulating Disney when it was announced Disney was to receive the Milestone Award in 1956.

The 200 plus pages of Trethewey's book should provide most people with more than they ever wanted to know about what an FBI file is like and what the bureau thought was important information worth keeping about this noted celebrity. Scholars who don't want to miss a fact should contact the FBI and obtain the entire file which is almost 500 pages long (another 100 pages are still classified and not available to the public). Your public library should have information on how to order documents from this government bureau under the Freedom of Information Act. 

Karl Cohen is an animation critic and historian who heads ASIFA-San Francisco. He's a frequent contributor to ANIMATO!.

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Voices— From Page 19

And, it is finally here that we have a name to connect to a voice; for this froggy voice was also used often at Warner Brothers in the 1930s, and thanks to the late Bob Clampett we know the voice actor's name who performed it - Danny Webb.

Danny Webb was working at Warner's when *The Country Mouse* and *I'd Love to Take Orders From You* were made - the precursors, if I'm correct to the Costello worm in *Early Bird* and the Colvig Bat in *Belfry*. The Gildersleeves voice is also heard at Lantz during the same period Webb was there, and Webb was certainly known to Tex Avery from his Warner's days.


It also makes sense that *Hare Conditioned* would not have been built around a voice actor not already proven (especially, since in my opinion, the Gildersleeves imitation is not a strong one).

So, there you have it, my nomination for the person who performed the voices detailed in this column, including Goofy. To be sure my hypothesis is built upon circumstantial evidence, and is purely speculative. My second nominee, since I'm speculating would be Elmore Vincent,

also around at Warner's in the mid-Thirties specializing in old codgers. If either nominee's name jogs a memory for Chuck or Friz I'd love to know!

A mystery solved perhaps. Little is known about Danny Webb, except that he actually starred in a Columbia live action short, 1939's *A Star is Shorn*, that Graham and I would dearly love to see or at least have a soundtrack of. (This information was unearthed by Graham.)

But, we'll save what else is known about Danny Webb's cartoon voice work until a future column when we'll contrast Danny Webb with his similarly named but even more obscure contemporary cartoon voice-mimic Dave Weber; two names hardly ever heard of, but between them, Webb and Webber filled many a cartoon soundtrack in the days prior to the day when Mel would "do 'em all!" See ya next time!

Acknowledgements: Graham Webb, Mike Barrier, Milt Gray, and the gracious giving of time and memories by the late Bob Clampett, Billy Bletcher, Mel Blanc, Walter Tetley, Cliff Arquette and the Disney Archives. 

Hames Ware is an animation historian who is also a voice artist based in the mid-West.

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WHY DO I LIKE ANIME?

Opinion by John Beam

"Why do you like Japanese animation?" I have to answer this question a lot, mostly asked by people whom I have gotten to know in animation school and during my brief animation career. I used to engage in conversations and debates with these people involving many topics concerning animation, but anime was rarely one of them. I still enjoy talking about the contributions Bob Clampett made while laboring at Leon Schlesinger's, or debating who was the greatest animator at Disney Studios (Vladimir Tytla or Milt Kahl?), or asserting that Shamus Culhane actually did rotoscope Betty Boop doing the hula on *Bamboo Isle* (Sorry James, but what other conclusion can there be?). Now I usually include anime in these conversations.

My friends and colleagues are now scratching their heads. Their bewilderment is based mostly on how I used to spend my past times in regard to animation, and the study of animation history, but it is also based upon misconceptions about anime, several of which I used to have. These misconceptions were:

1) Japanese animation is not very good (i.e. of the *Speed Racer* variety), 2) It is mostly for people who are science-fiction fanatics, and 3) The stories and dialogue in anime are as stupid in Japanese as it is in the English-dubbed versions they have seen. I invariably have to inform these people of their misconceptions, and explain what anime is really about.

1) The animation in anime is as good as any in the world, in my humble opinion. "But wait!" you might say, "the characters move so jerkily, and do not flow like Disney animation." What is missing from most anime in such instances are several inbetweens. The animation itself is brilliant. Most animation productions in Japan do not have the tremendous budgets that are afforded to films like Disney's *Aladdin* or *The Lion King*, and some short-cuts are taken.

The reason for this is mostly because studios in Japan produce an enormous volume of animation every year, a production schedule which makes America's look minuscule in comparison. Another reason for fewer inbetweens is the incredible amount of detail involved in a lot of anime (anyone who has ever seen films like Yoshikazu Yasuhiko's *The Venus Wars*, or Hayao Miyazaki's *Laputa - Castle in the Sky* knows what I'm talking about).

Not only do I believe anime is extremely

well-animated, I regard many of the anime backgrounds and layouts as superior to those of their American counterparts. The Japanese artists simply have a knack for making the best out of a scene, with brilliant colors, realism, and interesting, dramatic angles. I often marvel more at how a scene is laid out, rather than how the



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actual action is being played out.

2) Story material in anime is rich and varied, much more so than anywhere else in the world. Sure, most fans of anime probably prefer science fiction stories like *Macross* (a.k.a. "Robotech") or *Bubblegum Crisis*, but these people are only ignoring the other films available. Do you like a love story? Well, in anime we have series like *Kimagure Orange Road*, and a feature like *I Can Hear The Sea*. Do you like situational comedies? *Maison Ikkoku* and *Ah, My Goddess!* are as good as any. Drama? *The Wings of Honneamise* and *Nadia and the Secret of Blue Water* will get a rise out of you. Would you rather watch something suitable for the whole family? Miyazaki's *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *My Neighbor Totoro* can fill the bill. Simply put, if you like a good story, anime

has something for you.

3) Concerning the intelligence in anime, this might not be for you if you have an affinity for *Captain Planet* or *Goof Troop*. Plots contained in anime are rarely contrived and are tied together very well. Things which occur in these films

happen for a reason, and are not thrown in for the pleasure of the moment (there are exceptions of course, such as exploding heads and the like in *Fist of the Northstar*).

We can actually see character development in anime. If a character is evil, we see why he is evil, rather than assuming he's evil because of the dark complexion or a leer across his face. Furthermore, the crisis often involves the protagonist's dealing with her/himself, rather than outside forces, giving the audience a better look at who the character is. Two excellent examples of films with this sort of character development are *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *The Wings of Honneamise*, two of the finest animated tales I have ever seen.

Character motivations are very important in anime. The emotions and desires of anime characters can be quite intense at times, sometimes explosive. Many people who enjoy anime like *Bubblegum Crisis* often talk about characters like Priss and Brian J. Mason before they get to the tremendous action. Characters with such depth and breadth are far too rare in American animation today.

So, there are some of my reasons for liking, even preferring anime over films produced anywhere else today. Have I dumped upon animation that is produced today in the U.S. in the process of writing this? You betcha!

Do I like preferring anime over animation made in the U.S.? Not in the least! I would prefer seeing great animated stories with great animated characters in them produced here in America, but it seems that what we have here are films that contain possibly the greatest animation in the world, with little else to say in their favor. Do I see any change in this trend? Not at the moment. The enormous success of *The Lion King* proves conclusively that good P.R. and media hype can bring in record ticket receipts. Why should production companies here change when they are so successful at what their doing?

John Beam is an animation professional who reviews anime for a number of publications, including ANIMATO!

Gallery news

Art Forgeries Discovered

Vintage Ink and Paint of North Hollywood, CA and Stay Tooned Gallery of Barrington, IL have announced some disturbing news. According to a recent press release, a large group of animation art forgeries have found their way into the marketplace.

A little more than two years ago, according to the release, an animation art gallery in Los Angeles purchased a large collection of animation art for approximately \$70,000.00. The collection included about 50 animation drawings, cels, background paintings and hand-drawn model sheets reputed to be from both the Warner Brothers and Disney Studios. Subsequently, it was discovered that none of the artwork included in the sale was authentic. The gallery was able to recover their money, but was forced to return the fake art to the seller. At the time, the gallery was assured by the seller that he would not offer the artwork for sale again. Since then, several pieces from this batch have surfaced at estate auctions and swap meets across the country. In December of 1994, a large number of these pieces were offered to a Chicago animation art dealer by a group of individuals which included at least one of the principals from the failed Los Angeles deal. Although many of these individuals later claimed to be merely innocent intermediaries, none of them were willing to provide addresses or telephone numbers to the Chicago dealer. All communications were made through a single pager number. This group was informed that the artwork that they were offering were forgeries, but unfortunately, none of the artwork was able to be recovered and destroyed.

These forgeries are easily identified by their extensive use of runner stamps, crimped seals and hand-written notations. None of the artwork is on standard studio paper, and none of the rubber stamps and marginal notations are of the same design used at the studios. The artwork is usually poorly drawn or traced from book illustrations. Many of the pieces are on old yellowed papers or artificially-aged sheets and some are trimmed and mounted to mat board.

For more information, contact Vintage Ink and Paint at 5701 Klump Ave. #7, North Hollywood, CA 91601 or Stay Tooned Gallery, 220 S. Cook St., Suite 103, Barrington, IL 60010.

FilmArt's Cartoon World Helps Makes A Wish Come True

FilmArt's Cartoon World in Huntington,

NY was the site for a young man from Great Britain to have a wish come true. The animation art gallery helped Make-A-Wish of Metro New York fulfill Jo Gould's dream of meeting a celebrity Disney animator and seeing how animated characters come to life. The ten year-old was in the New York area in late January and early February receiving treatment for a brain tumor at the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center.

FilmArt's executive director Aron Laiken assembled an impressive group of animated and print cartoonists headed by veteran Disney animator Al Baruch. Also in the group were Fleischer and Famous Studios legend Myron Waldman, *Archie Comics* artist Stan Goldberg, and *New Yorker* artist Arnie Levin. Gould received drawings from the artists present and from others who could not attend such as *Garfield's* Jim Davis. He also received an *Aladdin* lithograph signed by Michael Eisner, C.E.O. of Walt Disney Productions.

DISNEY ANIMATION
STUDIO ARTS DEPARTMENT

#017

OK



Above: Fraudulent animation layout drawing of Donald Duck traced from a model pose. Note the numerous runner stamps and approval notations, none of which were ever used by the Disney Studios. The sheet was trimmed to eliminate peg holes and the paper was yellowed with age.

Below: Original model drawing by Les Clark. Note the free flowing lines and the subtle variation of the line weight. Most forgeries are laboriously traced, and lack proper construction.



Jo Gould (first row center) displays the *Aladdin* lithograph he received from Michael Eisner during his wish-come-true at FilmArt's Cartoon World. Standing with him is the staff of FilmArt's Cartoon including executive director Aron Laiken (center).



Bricks and Bouquets...

Congrats to Marv Newland and the International Rocketship crew for their impressive work on *The Far Side* animated special aired late last year on CBS. I'm not sure how many animation studios could have done justice to Gary Larson's twisted visions, besides Newland's crew.

A hearty Bronx cheer for what Disney did to the nation's theater owners with their Thanksgiving re-release of *The Lion King*. As someone who ran an independent first-run theater for three years, I can tell you the Disney organization always plays hardball with exhibitors. They know their animated product is in demand, and they ask (and receive) sizable up-front advances from theaters for a first-run booking. A theater can pay thousands of dollars up-front for a movie, and then be charged 70 percent of their box-office for the lucrative first week of an anticipated film. I'd love to know how much Disney soaked theaters for the re-release of *The Lion King*. Their re-release also threw second-run theaters for a loop, because *The Lion King*'s re-release first run and the street date of the video release are so close, neighborhood houses barely had any time to make any money from the picture. Granted this strategy is similar to how Warner Brothers handled the video release of *Batman*, but I can only hope it's not the start of a trend for Disney.

Watch out if you're a video purist for a number of live-action Disney titles that have successfully been test marketed in a LP-record mode. Let's hope the company isn't encouraged to do that with their animation library.

Hugs and kisses for Jerry Beck and his organization of a wonderful event at the Museum of Modern Art in New York early in February. Jerry, along with the help of the staff of the Museum's film

division, put together a four-day retrospective on Famous Studios, the studio Paramount Pictures created in 1942 to succeed the Fleischer Studios.

Famous has long been the subject of a love/hate relationship with animation fans. On one hand, the studio's cartoons, although always attractive and highly professional, were often criticized for not having the creative spark the Fleischer cartoons had. The other side of the Famous story is that their cartoons were indeed popular, especially with younger children and featured characters that built up quite a fan following including Casper the Ghost, Baby Huey, and Little Lulu (adapted from the popular *Saturday Evening Post* comic strip).

I was able to attend the first evening show which showed cartoons from 1942 until the Paramount Studio closed in 1967. Attending this event were quite number of people who had worked at Famous including Myron and Rosalie Waldman, writer Seymour Reit, announcing superstar and the voice of Bluto Jackson Beck, the "old Philosopher" Eddie Lawrence, Ralph Bakshi, Howard Post, Howard Beckerman, and Shamus Culhane. Syd Raymond (the voice of Baby Huey) couldn't attend as he was making a film in Florida, although his family obviously enjoyed the attention his work was receiving.

It was a wonderful evening watching the cartoon with many of the people who made them, and seeing most of the shorts in pristine 35mm prints on a big screen.

Pat and I wish good luck to former ANIMATO! writer Michelle Klein-Häss. As diligent readers will remember, Michelle wrote the article on Jim Smith of Spumco and the profile of June Foray. Michelle had come to us months ago with her proposal of doing a series of

articles on women in animation which matched the idea Pat and I had been talking about for a while. Michelle has decided to begin her own animation magazine, entitled *Frame Zero*, in which I'm sure you'll get to see her series.

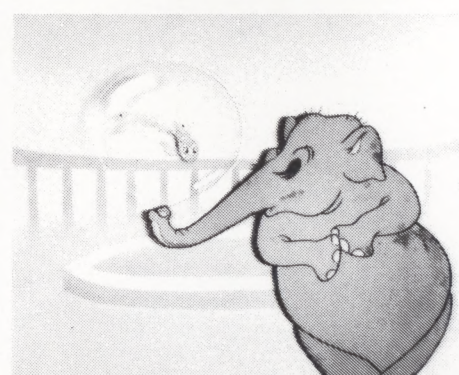
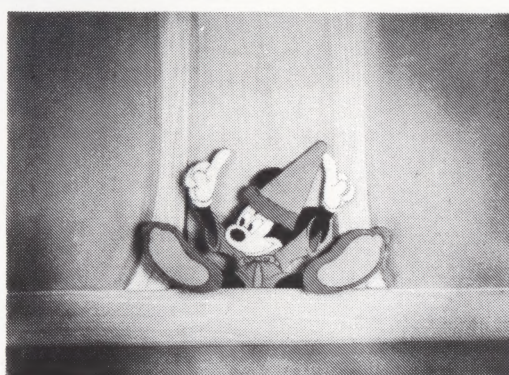
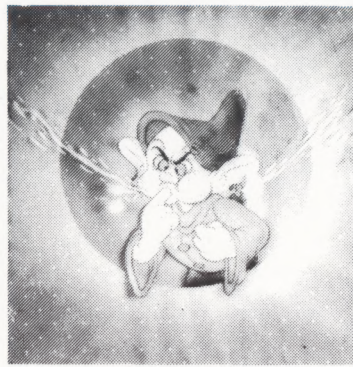
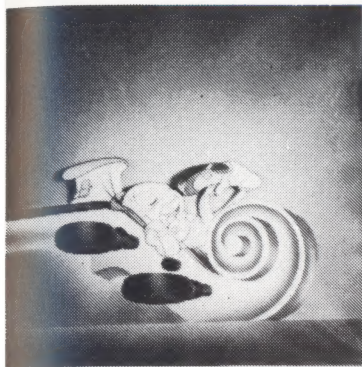
Hey, how can Universal justify saying their direct-to-video sequel *The Land Before Time II* was made by the same people who made the first film? Don Bluta's name isn't on the box! Give me a call!

If you're looking for a little freshness on broadcast television, try *Reboot* on ABC. This Saturday morning series shows that the networks are indeed capable of presenting something to kids that isn't a spin-off or rip-off of something else. The computer animation is nifty, and the stories are witty. What more could a kid (or an adult) want? ABC, the network that has given us *Bump in the Night*, should take a bow.

ANIMATO! on the road! Yes, Pat and I will be at Chillercon April 21, 22, 23 at the Meadowlands Hilton in New Jersey. Come by and say "hello!"

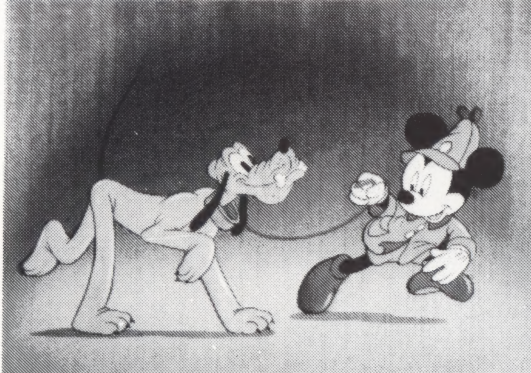
Finally, an explanation about the delay...yes, this issue of ANIMATO! is late. Pat and I appreciate the fact that people have been concerned enough to write or call us about the whereabouts of issue 31. Due to some problems beyond our control, we strayed off of our production schedule. We're back on track, though, and issue 32 will be in stores in June.

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